

The Westminster
Senior Intermediate Quarterly
APRIL - MAY - JUNE

1920



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Edited by John T. Faris D.D.

The Presbyterian Board of Publication
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ORDERS OF SERVICE FOR THE SECOND QUARTER, 1920¹

OPENING SERVICE, No. 1

May be used from April 4 to May 9

THE distribution of Bibles, class books, and hymnals should be made before the opening of the school.

NOTE.—It is understood of course that the hymns and Scripture readings indicated in these orders of service are not to be used every Sunday, but that these selections are given to indicate the character of music that may most helpfully be used, and the Scripture passages that are particularly adapted to such exercises.

OPENING WORSHIP

MUSIC.—Five minutes while school is assembling.

DOORS CLOSED.

SILENT PRAYER.—(School rises at signal from piano.)

PRAYER.—By superintendent or some one selected.

OPENING SENTENCES.

SUPERINTENDENT.—Make a joyful noise unto Jehovah, all ye lands.²

SCHOOL.—Serve Jehovah with gladness: come before his presence with singing.

SUPERINTENDENT.—Know ye that Jehovah, he is God: it is he that hath made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

SCHOOL.—Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: give thanks unto him, and bless his name.

SUPERINTENDENT.—For Jehovah is good; his lovingkindness endureth for ever, and his faithfulness unto all generations.

SCHOOL SEATED.

DOORS OPENED.

HYMN.—“Alleluia,” No. 179.

RECITATION.—The Beatitudes (by the school).

HYMN.

SCRIPTURE LESSON.

PRAYER.

MARKING ATTENDANCE RECORD AND OFFERING.

HYMN.

SUPERINTENDENT'S OR PASTOR'S REMARKS.

MISSIONARY INSTRUCTION.

HYMN.—(Appropriate to the lesson for the day.)

CLASS PERIOD.

CLOSING WORSHIP

MUSIC.—To announce close of lesson period.

HYMN.

SECRETARY'S REPORT.

CLOSING HYMN.

MIZPAH BENEDICTION.

OPENING SERVICE, No. 2

May be used from May 16 to June 27

MUSIC.—To announce opening of the school.

RESPONSIVE READING.—Prov. 22 : 1-18.

HYMN.—“Alleluia,” No. 53.

SCHOOL SEATED.

DOORS OPENED.

HYMN.—“Alleluia,” No. 99.

MEMORY WORK.

MARKING ATTENDANCE RECORD AND OFFERING.

HYMN.—“Alleluia,” No. 206.

SCRIPTURE LESSON.

PRAYER.—Followed by The Lord's Prayer in unison.

MISSIONARY INSTRUCTION.

HYMN.—“Alleluia,” No. 127.

SUPERINTENDENT'S WORDS.—Announcements, and so on.

HYMN.—(Appropriate to the lesson.)

CLASS PERIOD.

¹ Extra copies of these Orders of Service, on heavy paper, may be ordered of the publishers at 50 cents a hundred.

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Vol. XLI

APRIL 1, for APRIL, MAY, JUNE, 1920

No. 2

Single subscriptions, 40 cents a year. School subscriptions, two or more to one address, 28 cents a year, 7 cents a quarter each.

NATIONAL SECURITY AND GREATNESS



DEAR FRIENDS WHO READ THE QUARTERLY:

We are to study for the next months a history written in a fashion other than that in which most history is written. It is concerned primarily not with the prosperity and strength of the nation described, but with the nation's relation to God. But it shows clearly that the prosperity and strength of the nation, yes, even its very existence, were due to the way it followed God and kept his law. We are Americans. Never have we thought so much of our country as we have during these past years. We were proud as our men went overseas to face the foe and help defeat him. We are proud as we realize our strength, and how great a place we are to have in the shaping of the world's future. But what of our own future? What have these lessons for us as Americans? Do these old laws that guided Israel still hold? Is God bigger than armies and great guns, and does he decide the battle as he did for Deborah and Barak, as he did for Gideon? These are things we ought to think about as we study these lessons. It is a most glorious thing to be an American in these great days. But it is a terrible thing. Suppose we fail! Suppose we offend God and pass into the darkness as many another proud nation has passed!

But the Christians of America can, under God's guidance, save the world.

Faithfully yours,

W. E. Brooks

EASTER LESSON

The Golden Text—"Behooved it not the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into his glory?"—
Luke 24: 26.

TEXT OF LESSON, Luke 24: 13-31

For entire lesson, see Luke 24: 13-35.

COMMON VERSION

13 ¶ And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Em'ma-us, which was from Je-ru'sa-lem about threescore furlongs.

14 And they talked together of all these things which had happened.

15 And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Je'sus himself drew near, and went with them.

16 But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.

17 And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?

18 And the one of them, whose name was Cle'o-pas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Je-ru'sa-lem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?

19 And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Je'sus of Naz'a-reth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people:

20 And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him.

21 But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Is'ra-el: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done.

22 Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre;

23 And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive.

24 And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not.

25 Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken:

26 Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?

27 And beginning at Mo'ses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

28 And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further.

29 But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them.

30 And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with

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13 And behold, two of them were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which was threescore furlongs from Jerusalem. 14 And they communed with each other of all these things which had happened. 15 And it came to pass, while they communed and questioned together, that Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. 16 But their eyes were holden that they should not know him. 17 And he said unto them, What communications are these that ye have one with another, as ye walk? And they stood still, looking sad. 18 And one of them, named Cleopas, answering said unto him, Dost thou alone sojourn in Jerusalem and not know the things which are come to pass there in these days? 19 And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, The things concerning Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: 20 and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. 21 But we hoped that it was he who should redeem Israel. Yea and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things came to pass. 22 Moreover certain women of our company amazed us, having been early at the tomb; 23 and when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. 24 And certain of them that were with us went to the tomb, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not. 25 And he said unto them, O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Behooved it not the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into his glory? 27 And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. 28 And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they were going: and he made as though he would go further. 29 And they constrained him, saying, Abide with us; for it is toward evening, and the day is now far spent. And he went in to abide with them. 30 And it came to pass, when he had

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them, he took bread, and blessed *it*, and brake, and gave to them.

31 And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.

sat down with them to meat, he took the bread and blessed; and breaking *it* he gave to them. 31 And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.

Additional Passage for Study: I Cor. 15: 1-8.

The Time—Sunday, April 9, A.D. 30.

The Place—The road leading from Jerusalem to the little town of Emmaus.

DAILY HOME READINGS

DATE	TITLE	REFERENCE
Monday, March 29.....	Approaching Christ's Tomb.....	Luke 24: 1-12.
Tuesday, March 30.....	Christ Unrecognized.....	Luke 24: 13-27.
Wednesday, March 31.....	Christ Made Known.....	Luke 24: 28-35.
Thursday, April 1.....	A Doubter Convinced.....	John 20: 24-31.
Friday, April 2.....	At the Sea of Galilee.....	John 21: 1-14.
Saturday, April 3.....	Peter and the Risen Lord.....	John 21: 15-25.
Sunday, April 4.....	Hope in Christ.....	I Cor. 15: 12-20.

OTHER ACCOUNTS OF THE RISEN LORD

The four Gospels all contain accounts of the resurrection of Jesus, and the things he said and did. These accounts were written by different men, as the story was impressed on their memories. They differ as to details, which is as it should be, but they are alike in the main facts. If they had agreed in every detail, we should have reason to suspect their accuracy, for no four men on the witness stand ever describe an event in just the same manner, unless they have carefully rehearsed it beforehand. Try this with four boys. Ask them to describe something they saw together, and you will see that, although they agree in the main facts, they are apt to be far apart in the details. So it was with the writers of the Gospels, and the fact that it was so is a great reason for believing in the story they tell. In addition to these accounts we have the accounts of Jesus' appearance to Paul. These are found in Acts 9: 3-8; 22: 6-11; 26: 12-18; and also in I Corinthians 15: 3-8.

THE DEAD LORD

If ever man was surely dead it was Jesus. The writers of the Gospel stories tell a clear tale, and the clearest thing in it is the fact of their own loss of faith because they knew that he in whom they trusted was dead. They had seen him die. They had heard the sentence pronounced. They had followed him to the hill where the three crosses were placed. They had seen the nails driven and the spear thrust. They had stood the long hours under the strange, black sky and watched his death. When evening had come, they had followed with lagging feet in the steps of those who bore him to his tomb. They had seen the stone rolled, and the seal placed, and the guard set. There he had lain all through the weary Sabbath's length, the saddest, darkest Sabbath earth has ever seen. Broken-hearted, with mingled shame and sorrow, they kept quiet in their lodgings. They had "hoped that it was he who should redeem Israel," as this lesson

tells. But such hope was gone, and faith was dead. It is well for us to get this fact solidly implanted in our memories. We often say that "the wish was father to the thought," because when a man wishes a thing, he frequently imagines that it is so. But the last thing in the thoughts of the broken-hearted, dispirited band of Jesus' followers was the hope that he would ever be other than he was. He was dead, and their hopes were buried with him. Their faith never imagined the resurrection, for their faith was dead.

INTERESTED WITNESSES

Perhaps you may hear some one cast doubts on the disciples' story that Jesus was risen, because they were interested witnesses. What are interested witnesses? Those, of course, who have something to gain by testifying as they do. But what had the disciples to gain by telling a lie? They might have gone back to their homes in quiet Galilee, back to their old work of fishing and tax-gathering and the other things they were doing when Jesus called them. They would have lived quietly and died peacefully. But they chose to be prisoners and exiles, hounded and persecuted by their enemies, and despised by former friends; and they died, every one save John, by violence. Do men usually carry a lie so far? Surely self-interest bade them do exactly otherwise. And the change that came over them, making them brave men rather than cowards, self-forgetful rather than self-seeking, is a strong proof of the truth of the story.

THE ASTONISHING NEWS OF EASTER MORNING

The world never heard such a story as was told by the men and women who went to the tomb where Jesus had lain. They had gone to find a dead Master, to perform for him the last services which they would ever be able to render. They came with the word that he was no longer there,

because he was alive. Strange things had happened in the darkness. In the place where they thought to find the cold body they had seen wonderful angels, who told them that they need not mourn longer for him, because he had risen as he said he would. Of course they had heard him say that, but somehow it seems to have made no impression on them, possibly because they did not understand. That it was difficult for them to understand we see from the lesson. Don't you think that if you had been in their place, if you had never heard of Easter and of the risen Lord before, it would be difficult for you also to understand it and believe it? Then, after the vision of angels, they had seen the Lord himself. As the women left the tomb in the gray of the morning, Jesus himself had met them, and spoken to them in the words of familiar greeting, "All hail." And he had told them to tell all who believed in him that he had risen and was alive. Yet in spite of that we have the story of the lesson.

THE WEARY-HEARTED TRAVELERS

It was on the afternoon of that astonishing first Easter Day that these two disciples walked from Jerusalem to Emmaus, a distance of between seven and eight miles. We know that the name of one of these disciples was Cleopas, but the name of the other is unknown. We are not told the object of their journey, but we are told that they were sad as they walked, and for a sad man the miles are long. They were sad because they did not believe the story that the women had told them about the risen Christ.

All that they believed was what they had seen. And they had seen much in the last days to fill them with sadness. He was dead and gone, the Master whom they loved and trusted. Do you wonder that they were sad?

THE STRANGER'S QUESTION

As they were walking this way and talking about these things a stranger joined them and walked with them. The question he asked them about their sadness shocked them. They were so absorbed in their own troubles that they could not understand why the world was not the same weary place for everyone else. This is quite the human way. Every one of us, when things go wrong, is apt to feel "There

is no sorrow like my sorrow." And they had reason for sadness. Not only was their Friend Jesus dead, but so many things had gone with him. They put these all in the phrase, "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel." They had dreamed of freedom from the Roman yoke, of new glory for their nation under the leadership of the Messiah-King, that they would share in this glory and know this glorious freedom. We have heard much of freedom in these latter years when the German power was threatening the liberty of men. We ought to be able to understand how these freedom-loving Jews felt as they saw their fair hopes shattered. Their country had lost a leader and they had lost a friend. Do you wonder that they turned indignantly on the stranger and asked him if he was ignorant of the things that had



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THE WALK TO EMMAUS

been happening in Jerusalem. And the stranger calmly answered, "What things?"

"WHAT THINGS?"

Let us think for a little while about this question of Jesus, for we know what these two men did not know, that it was Jesus who was talking with them. It did not suit his purpose for them to know that it was he, and so "their eyes were holden." But when we remember all that Jesus had gone through in these days of which they were thinking, it is an astonishing question. Betrayed, mocked, scourged, forsaken by his friends, nailed to a cross, all the bitter agony and shame of his dying as the companion of thieves and outcasts, these were the things through which he had passed, and of which they were thinking. Yet quietly, there on the Emmaus road, as the shadows lengthened and the day drew to its end, he asked, "What things?" as if he did not remember what had taken place. Ah! It was all behind. It had hurt him, as it hurts us, to see his friends forsake him. It had hurt him to see the ingratitude of those he had helped, to realize that those he had come to serve would send him to his death. But now he could look back on it all and quietly say, "What things?" for they were nothing compared to the joy of the things he had accomplished, the great salvation he had wrought for men.

So it will be for all who follow him, and who rise after a while to immortal life through him. The things that worry us so much now will be seen in a new light. Of course for many of us life holds much struggle.

"We climb the steep ascent of heaven
Through peril, toil, and pain."

We suffer disappointments, we meet ingratitude, we have to toil hard. Yet no one would be willing to say that he has more to bear than Jesus had in those bitter days that ended on Calvary. Yet the sting had gone out of all of it for him. Shall it not be that when we rise with him we shall feel the same way about the things which disturb us sorely now?

A NEW PROOF FOR DOUBTING MEN

But Jesus had something else to teach these men. Let us remember that they still doubted the stories that the women and the other disciples had told. They were still in the condition where they could not understand his death. He had to explain it to them before they would understand his resurrection. So he began a careful explanation of the necessity of that death for man's salvation, as Moses and the prophets had spoken of it. And as he talked, gradually understanding came. The sadness vanished. They saw the great plan of the great work he had done. And when they had at

length arrived at the house where they were to spend the night they made the astonishing discovery that this Stranger with whom they had journeyed was none other than Jesus himself. The story that the women had told was true. He was risen and alive in the world.

THE EVERYDAY MEANING OF EASTER

Jesus had a great work for these men to do in the world, the work of founding the Christian Church. They had to be sure of the facts—sure of who he was and what he had come to do and that he had done it. He made them sure that Easter. Are we equally sure? We ought to be, for we have to carry on the work they began. Easter is more than a time of glad carols and churches filled with flowers. It is more even than the reminder of the fact that we personally shall arise again to immortal life. It is the greatest stimulus in the world to daring service. His presence in the world means victory in that service. Because of such a leader the Church ought to dare, ought to aspire, ought to attempt the thing that seems impossible. It should be also a great personal truth. What Christ does for his Church, he does for the individual Christian, whether he be poor and humble, or great and high. Since he is the Helper of his Church, he is also our Helper. In every battle, in every fear, his presence is beside us. Let us realize this and remember it. There is no difficulty in our life too great for him, no problem too complex, no temptation too strong. "I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me." Let this Easter Day be the time when we put trivial things out of our lives, and plan lives big enough for eternity. And then let us live it, in the strength of him who is ever near to help.

OUR LORD'S APPEARANCES AFTER RESURRECTION

1. To Mary Magdalene alone, near Jerusalem. Mark 16 : 9; John 20 : 11-18.
2. To the women returning from the tomb. Matt. 28 : 9, 10.
3. To Simon Peter alone, near Jerusalem. Luke 24 : 34.
4. To two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Luke 24 : 13-15.
5. To all the apostles in Jerusalem, except the absent Thomas. John 20 : 19.
6. To the apostles in Jerusalem a second time, when Thomas was present. John 20 : 26-29.
7. To the seven disciples, fishing in the Sea of Galilee. John 21 : 1.
8. To James only, probably at Jerusalem. I Cor. 15 : 7.
9. To the eleven disciples on a mountain in Galilee, Matt. 28 : 16; and to over five hundred brethren at once, I Cor. 15 : 6, in Galilee, probably at the same time.
10. To all the apostles on the Mount of Olives, at his ascension. Luke 24 : 51.

THE LESSON'S WORDS AND PHRASES

15. **Communed.** Used here in the sense of "converse."

27. **Moses.** The writings of Moses, or the first five books of the Old Testament.

29. **Constrained him.** Urged him very strongly to remain.

31. **Their eyes were opened.** Power of recognition, which had been withheld when their "eyes were holden," v. 16, was granted again.

FOR INTERMEDIATE PUPILS

1. How do we know that Jesus rose from the dead?

2. Why did these men doubt the story of their friends? Would we not have done the same thing?

3. What does the resurrection of Jesus mean for us personally? What does it tell us about the friends who leave us and go to God?

4. What does the fact that Jesus has risen mean for our daily life and for the work which he expects us to do for him in the world?

The Intermediate Catechism

Q. 18. How do we receive Jesus Christ as our Saviour?

A. We receive Jesus Christ as our Saviour by repentance and faith.

Q. 19. What is it to repent?

A. To repent is to be truly sorry for sin and to turn from it unto God for forgiveness, with sincere purpose to do God's will.

Q. 20. What is faith in Jesus Christ?

A. Faith in Jesus Christ is believing on him and trusting him as our own Saviour and Lord.

FOR SENIOR STUDENTS

1. What additional proof for the resurrection of Jesus do we find in the fact that the stories of the disciples differ in details?

2. What did Jesus mean when he said, "It behooved Christ to suffer"? Could he have saved the world if he had become the Messiah-King at Jerusalem?

3. Why did he speak of the events of the preceding days as "What things"?

4. What is the everyday meaning of Easter? for the individual? for the work of the Christian Church?

The Shorter Catechism

Q. 66. What is the reason annexed to the fifth commandment?

A. The reason annexed to the fifth commandment is, a promise of long life and prosperity (as far as it shall serve for God's glory, and their own good) to all such as keep this commandment.

Lesson II—DEBORAH AND BARAK DELIVER ISRAEL

The Golden Text—"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."—Ps. 46 : 1.

TEXT OF LESSON, JUDG. 4: 4-16

For entire lesson, see Judg. 4: 4 to 5: 31.

COMMON VERSION

4 ¶ And Deb'o-rah, a prophetess, the wife of Lap'idoth, she judged Is'ra-el at that time.

5 And she dwelt under the palm tree of Deb'o-rah between Ra'mah and Beth'-el in mount E'phra-im: and the children of Is'ra-el came up to her for judgment.

6 And she sent and called Ba'arak the son of A-bin'o-am out of Ke'desh-naph'ta-li, and said unto him, Hath not the LORD God of Is'ra-el commanded, *saying*, Go and draw toward mount Ta'bor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the children of Naph'ta-li and of the children of Zeb'u-lun?

7 And I will draw unto thee to the river Ki'shon Sis'e-rah, the captain of Ja'bin's army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thine hands.

8 And Ba'arak said unto her, If thou wilt go with me, then I will go: but if thou wilt not go with me, *then* I will not go.

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4 Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time. 5 And she dwelt under the palm-tree of Deborah between Ramah and Beth-el in the hill-country of Ephraim: and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment. 6 And she sent and called Barak the son of Abinoam out of Kedesh-naphtali, and said unto him, Hath not Jehovah, the God of Israel, commanded, *saying*, Go and draw unto mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali and of the children of Zebulun? 7 And I will draw unto thee, to the river Kishon, Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thy hand. 8 And Barak said unto her, If thou wilt go with me, then I will go; but if thou wilt not go with me, I will not go. 9 And she said, I will

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9 And she said, I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour; for the LORD shall sell Sis'e-ra into the hand of a woman. And Deb'o-rah arose, and went with Ba'rak to Ke'desh.

10 ¶ And Ba'rak called Zeb'u-lun and Naph'tali to Ke'desh; and he went up with ten thousand men at his feet: and Deb'o-rah went up with him.

11 Now He'ber the Ke'nite, which was of the children of Ho'bab the father in law of Mo'ses, had severed himself from the Ke'nites, and pitched his tent unto the plain of Za'a-na'im, which is by Ke'desh.

12 And they shewed Sis'e-ra that Ba'rak the son of A-bin'o-am was gone up to mount Ta'bor.

13 And Sis'e-ra gathered together all his chariots, even nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the people that were with him, from Ha-ro'sheth of the Gen'tiles unto the river of Ki'shon.

14 And Deb'o-rah said unto Ba'rak, Up; for this is the day in which the LORD hath delivered Sis'e-ra into thine hand: is not the LORD gone out before thee? So Ba'rak went down from mount Ta'bor, and ten thousand men after him.

15 And the LORD discomfited Sis'e-ra, and all his chariots, and all his host, with the edge of the sword before Ba'rak; so that Sis'e-ra lighted down off his chariot, and fled away on his feet.

16 But Ba'rak pursued after the chariots, and after the host, unto Ha-ro'sheth of the Gen'tiles: and all the host of Sis'e-ra fell upon the edge of the sword; and there was not a man left.

surely go with thee: notwithstanding, the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honor; for Jehovah will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. And Deborah arose, and went with Barak to Kedesh. 10 And Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali together to Kedesh; and there went up ten thousand men at his feet: and Deborah went up with him.

11 Now Heber the Kenite had separated himself from the Kenites, even from the children of Hobab the brother-in-law of Moses, and had pitched his tent as far as the oak in Zaanannim, which is by Kedesh.

12 And they told Sisera that Barak the son of Abinoam was gone up to mount Tabor. 13 And Sisera gathered together all his chariots, even nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the people that were with him, from Harosheth of the Gentiles, unto the river Kishon. 14 And Deborah said unto Barak, Up; for this is the day in which Jehovah hath delivered Sisera into thy hand: is not Jehovah gone out before thee? So Barak went down from mount Tabor, and ten thousand men after him. 15 And Jehovah discomfited Sisera, and all his chariots, and all his host, with the edge of the sword before Barak; and Sisera alighted from his chariot, and fled away on his feet. 16 But Barak pursued after the chariots, and after the host, unto Harosheth of the Gentiles: and all the host of Sisera fell by the edge of the sword; there was not a man left.

The Time—About 1350 B.C.

The Place—The Plain of Esdraelon, or Jezreel. This plain is one of the world's greatest battle grounds. It is the key not merely to the possession of Palestine, but to the road between Asia and Egypt as well. Here Gideon fought, here Saul died, here Josiah was slain. Here successively have camped and battled the armies of Alexander, of the Romans, the Crusaders, and the Saracens, and here in the World War, General Allenby's army won the great campaign which sealed the fate of the Turkish Empire.

DAILY HOME READINGS

DATE	TITLE	REFERENCE
Monday, April 5.....	Israel's Cry Heard.....	Judg. 4 : 1-9.
Tuesday, April 6.....	Deborah and Barak Deliver Israel.....	Judg. 4 : 10-16.
Wednesday, April 7.....	A Song of Victory.....	Judg. 5 : 1-20.
Thursday, April 8.....	God Our Refuge.....	Psaln 46.
Friday, April 9.....	Faith and Victory.....	Heb. 11 : 32-40.
Saturday, April 10.....	"More Than Conquerors".....	Rom. 8 : 31-39.
Sunday, April 11.....	Eternal Deliverance.....	Rev. 7 : 9-17.

THE SITUATION IN ISRAEL

We are to turn again in our study to an old and very fascinating tale, the tale of how God prepared and preserved a people for the working out of his mighty purposes for men. The scene of the tale is the little land of Palestine, lying on the western border of Asia, between the great empires of the East, and the empire of Egypt. Its position was

a good deal like that of Belgium in Europe. Over it the armies of those early contenders for world power were constantly passing. Then it lay open as well to the raids of the tribes who lived on its borders. The Book of Judges is concerned principally with the tales of Israel's struggles with these marauders. The writers of these chronicles that make up the book depict these tribes as God's in-

struments for the disciplining of Israel when she wandered from his ways. Shadow and sunshine mingle in the book. The shadows are the stories of Israel's sin, of how the people sought false gods and did evil things. The sunshine is the tale of the persistent love of God, who never let his people go, who punished them and forgave them, but always cared for them because through them he intended to bless the world with a Saviour.

Israel, we are to remember, was not governed at this time as nations are usually governed. Its form of government was not a democracy, such as our country is, nor a monarchy, such as some of the nations of Europe, but a theocracy, that is, God himself was the King. The high priest was a sort of

were God's peculiar people. Judges is a strangely interesting book—"the record of a remote and turbulent age—a treasury of deeds and characters such as we find nowhere else, of sacred heroism springing up with supernatural growth from a soil otherwise most fertile in crime and atrocity." The keynote of the book is the frequent sentence, "In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes." But through all the wrongdoing God worked toward the day of his redemption.

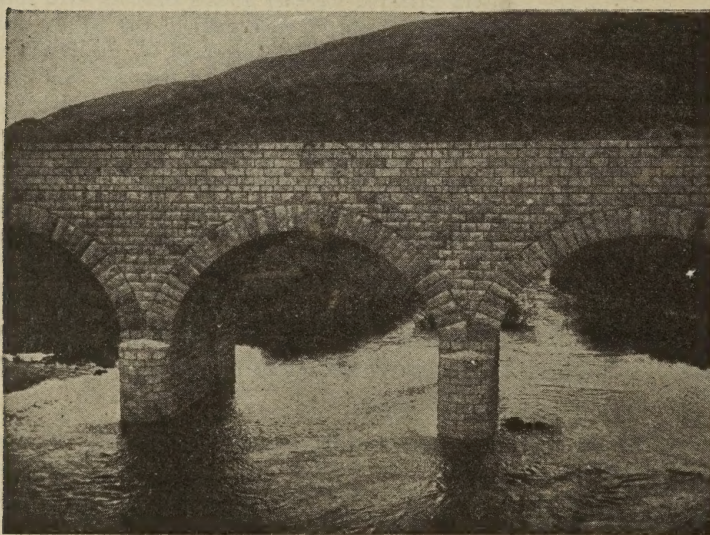
THE NEED OF A LEADER

The incident with which the lesson deals followed one of those periods when Israel had wandered away from God. She had turned again to those strange gods of the nations round about her, and was worshipping them instead of the God who had "brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." We blame her for this, and rightly, but do we not sometimes worship other things as gods, money and pleasure and success? Is not the First Commandment more frequently violated than we think? But this worship of the strange gods brought her always to the same difficulty. This time her condition was most serious. Her enemies overran the land, and Israel, sunk in her sin, lost not only her old confidence, but was fast losing her national consciousness—for when Deborah sent out her call, some of the tribes never stirred to help. They thought only of themselves. Sin and selfishness are always close together. It is when we love God that we are willing to forget self and to help others. Israel needed many things, but first she needed a leader who would rouse her to her duty and then guide her to the doing of it.

A WOMAN'S PART

Things never get so bad that God is helpless. That is an often repeated word in history. There was a deliverer ready in God's plan, and that deliverer was a woman. Hebrew names are always significant. Her name, "Deborah," means "a bee," and the bee is the symbol of industry. She summoned to her help Barak, whose name means "lightning." Do you see the significance? Industry and brilliancy is a rare combination, and it was God's combination for the deliverance of Israel.

Deborah was a prophetess. A woman of industry



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MODERN RAILROAD BRIDGE OVER THE RIVER KISHON

prime minister for God. When danger threatened, God raised up some strong man as leader or—as the book calls him—a "judge." There were fifteen judges in all. Of these, eight were military heroes, five led more peaceful lives, and Eli and Samuel stand apart with peculiar missions. We are told in the book that there was a central place of religious worship at Shiloh, where the tabernacle was erected, and where the tribes assembled for annual religious feasts. These feasts were a uniting factor in their life. They needed this greatly, for we must remember that not very many years before they had been slaves in Egypt, and there were still settlements of the conquered Canaanites in the land. The Israelites needed, in opposition to these influences, everything that would help them to remember that they

and character, she sought the honor of Jehovah, and Jehovah gave her the revelations by which she led the people. Her fame spread during the declining years of Ehud and after his death she became the foremost personality in Israel. Other judges had won their position by exploits that brought about national deliverances. Hers was due to the force of her character, coupled with the inspiration that God had given her. She prayed and pondered and planned for the time that Jehovah would arise in his might to deliver his people.

It is a task that, each in her own way, every woman can do. We hear much of woman's rights now. Deborah exercised a woman's privileges. What she did for Barak some woman has done for every one of the world's benefactors—been inspiration and wisdom and courage to him. What a part Mary must have had in shaping the earthly life of Jesus! It was she who helped to bring about the first miracle, and it was of her that he thought as he hung on the cross. Which is the more honorable, to do the world's great things or to be the inspiration of great things? The girl or the woman who has Deborah's love for God's honor can always do Deborah's service.

A MAN'S PART

Barak was a northern chieftain, living at Kedesh, among the hills of Naphtali. He was "a mighty man of valor," but he saw how great were the difficulties in freeing Israel. The enemy possessed vast resources. The army of Sisera had garrisoned the Plain of Esdraelon, and cut off the people of the hills from their brethren of the south. Barak sent messengers to the other tribes, summoning them to arms. From many quarters there was no response. But ten thousand men were gathered under Barak's leadership, largely from the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun, and with them he prepared to strike. A woman's faith and a man's power had begun the redemption of Israel.

GOD'S PART

With his ten thousand men Barak began his march through the mountain passes toward the plain where Sisera's army lay. From the side of Tabor they caught sight of the enemy. "Up," cried Deborah, "for this is the day . . . is not Jehovah gone out before thee?" God's battalions were moving on with Barak's battalions. "From heaven fought the stars, from their courses they fought against Sisera." It was a day of storm. As Barak's troops rushed forward on the enemy, the storm broke on them. Hail and lightning and thunder overwhelmed them. To them it was the wrath of Israel's God. To Barak it was a proof of God's favor. The soil of the plain is loose, being of volcanic origin, and the storm turned it into a morass, so that the horses of the cavalry and the heavy chariots of iron became useless and a hin-

drance. Before Israel's charges and the havoc of the storm the enemy broke and fled. "The river Kishon swept them away." A woman's faith, a man's might, the wonder-working hand of God, these were the elements that entered into Israel's victory. "And the land had rest forty years."

THE LESSON'S WORDS AND PHRASES

6. Draw. March stealthily. **Children.** Men of the tribes which had descended from Naphtali.
10. At his feet. Following him in his army.
12. Told. Reported to Sisera.
16. Fell by the edge of the sword. Were slain by the sword.

FOR INTERMEDIATE PUPILS

1. What was the difference between a judge and a king? How many judges were there? Name some of them.
2. What had brought Israel to the condition she was in?
3. Who were the three partners in Israel's relief? What did the woman do? What the man? Was God's part important?
4. In our lives is God necessary for the carrying out of our plans?

The Intermediate Catechism

Q. 21. How does God lead us to believe on Jesus Christ?

A. God leads us to believe on Jesus Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, showing us that we are sinful, and disposing and enabling us to accept him as he is offered to us in the gospel.

FOR SENIOR STUDENTS

1. Describe the system of judges in Israel. Why did it give way to a kingdom and a line of kings?
2. What part do you think these enemies had in the disciplining of Israel, and in the preparation of the people for God's purpose?
3. What qualities did these leaders have that are necessary for the tasks and problems we face to-day in the rebuilding of civilization?
4. The storm evidently had a large part in deciding the battle. Was this merely an accident?

The Shorter Catechism

Q. 67. Which is the sixth commandment?

A. The sixth commandment is, Thou shalt not kill.

Q. 68. What is required in the sixth commandment?

A. The sixth commandment requireth all lawful endeavors to preserve our own life, and the life of others.

THE VICTORY OF GIDEON'S BAND

The Golden Text—"There is no restraint to Jehovah to save by many or by few."—I Sam. 14: 6.

TEXT OF LESSON, JUDG. 7: 1-8, 16-21

For entire lesson, see Judg., ch. 7.

COMMON VERSION

1 Then Je-rub'ba-al, who is Gid'e-on, and all the people that *were* with him, rose up early, and pitched beside the well of Ha'rod: so that the host of the Mid'i-an-ites were on the north side of them, by the hill of Mo'reh, in the valley.

2 And the LORD said unto Gid'e-on, The people that *are* with thee *are* too many for me to give the Mid'i-an-ites into their hands, lest Is'ra-el, vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me.

3 Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever *is* fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from mount Gil'e-ad. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand.

4 And the LORD said unto Gid'e-on, The people *are* yet *too* many; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there: and it shall be, *that* of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go.

5 So he brought down the people unto the water: and the LORD said unto Gid'e-on, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink.

6 And the number of them that lapped, *putting* their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water.

7 And the LORD said unto Gid'e-on, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Mid'i-an-ites into thine hand: and let all the *other* people go every man unto his place.

8 So the people took victuals in their hand, and their trumpets: and he sent all *the rest* of Is'ra-el every man unto his tent, and retained those three hundred men: and the host of Mid'i-an was beneath him in the valley.

* * * * *

16 And he divided the three hundred men *into* three companies, and he put a trumpet in every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers.

17 And he said unto them, Look on me, and do likewise: and, behold, when I come to the outside of the camp, it shall be *that*, as I do, so shall ye do.

18 When I blow with a trumpet, I and all that *are* with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on

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1 Then Jerubbaal, who is Gideon, and all the people that were with him, rose up early, and encamped beside the spring of Harod: and the camp of Midian was on the north side of them, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley.

2 And Jehovah said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hand, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me. 3 Now therefore proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever is fearful and trembling, let him return and depart from mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand.

4 And Jehovah said unto Gideon, The people are yet too many; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there: and it shall be, that of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go. 5 So he brought down the people unto the water: and Jehovah said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink. 6 And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, was three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water. 7 And Jehovah said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thy hand; and let all the people go every man unto his place. 8 So the people took victuals in their hand, and their trumpets; and he sent all the men of Israel every man unto his tent, but retained the three-hundred men: and the camp of Midian was beneath him in the valley.

* * * * *

16 And he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put into the hands of all of them trumpets, and empty pitchers, with torches within the pitchers. 17 And he said unto them, Look on me, and do likewise: and, behold, when I come to the outermost part of the camp, it shall be that, as I do, so shall ye do. 18 When I blow the trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye

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every side of all the camp, and say, *The sword of the LORD, and of Gid'e-on.*

19 ¶ So Gid'e-on, and the hundred men that *were* with him, came unto the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch; and they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers that *were* in their hands.

20 And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow *withal*: and they cried, *The sword of the LORD, and of Gid'e-on.*

21 And they stood every man in his place round about the camp: and all the host ran, and cried, and fled.

the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say, *For Jehovah and for Gideon.*

19 So Gideon, and the hundred men that were with him, came unto the outermost part of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch, when they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and brake in pieces the pitchers that were in their hands. 20 And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the torches in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands wherewith to blow; and they cried, *The sword of Jehovah and of Gideon.* 21 And they stood every man in his place round about the camp; and all the host ran; and they shouted, and put *them* to flight.

The Time—1323 B.C.

The Place—The Plain of Esdraelon.

DAILY HOME READINGS

DATE	TITLE	REFERENCE
Monday, April 12.....	Israel Oppressed.....	Judg. 6: 1-10.
Tuesday, April 13.....	Gideon's Call.....	Judg. 6: 11-24.
Wednesday, April 14.....	Gideon's Fidelity.....	Judg. 6: 25-32.
Thursday, April 15.....	Gideon Encouraged.....	Judg. 6: 33-40.
Friday, April 16.....	The Victory of Gideon's Band.....	Judg. 7: 1-8, 16-21.
Saturday, April 17.....	David's Call.....	I Sam. 16: 1-13.
Sunday, April 18.....	Power of Faith.....	Heb. 11: 23-30.

THE SITUATION IN ISRAEL

About twenty-five years had passed since God had saved Israel through Deborah and Barak, and Israel had sinned again in the same old way. This time it was the wandering tribes of Midian who were God's instruments in bringing Israel back to her senses. Year after year they raided the land just as the harvest was ripe. All year the people of Israel would toil in the fields, and then, just as the fruit of the toil was ready, these spoilers would swoop down and carry off the ripened grain, leaving the Israelites to suffer. Then, as always in their extremity, "the children of Israel cried unto Jehovah." No matter how far gone in sin a man is, he never gets too far away for God to hear his cry, or for God's arm to reach and save when he cries. And God raised up a new deliverer to help his people.

A HERO AT WORK

Gideon was God's man. Gideon does not seem like a hero when we first meet him. This is a way heroes have. Think of Washington running surveys and Lincoln splitting rails. The splendor comes after the real achievement. But Gideon was doing his best, trying amid terrible conditions to preserve a living for his family. Many men think that the times in which we live are bad times. They also think that they have special gifts which fit them peculiarly for leadership. Because these gifts are not quickly recognized by others they grow discontented, and fret over the work they are doing as unsuitable for men so fine. This may be our present danger. If so, look at some of God's heroes, and

the tasks with which they were busy when God called them to great service. Elisha was a farmer, plowing with twelve yoke of oxen, when Elijah cast his mantle over him. David was out keeping his sheep when Samuel called him to the kingdom. Jesus toiled in a carpenter shop until he was thirty years old, and his disciples were mending nets when he bade them follow him. And here was Gideon providing food for the family needs when God's messenger summoned him. "We put ourselves in the way of divine visits when we employ ourselves in honest business." God never used a man for his service whom he found sitting and groaning over the hardness of his lot. In all the splendid company of his ministers there is only one "weeping prophet," and he wept not because of his lot but over the sins of men.

HOW GOD PICKED HIS ARMY

The previous chapter tells how God tested the leader Gideon, and found him worthy. The lesson deals with the tests that were applied to the army, so that a chosen, special company was found to do the work of delivering the nations from the oppressors. We are of course likely to ask why did not God use all who were in Gideon's army. Let us get that reason very clearly in mind. It is stated in God's own words to Gideon in the second verse. God was striving for one thing only in all these dealings with Israel, to teach them dependence upon him alone. For this he allowed them to be oppressed, and for this he delivered them from the oppressors. Now he had succeeded in preparing a leader

whose heart was full of faith, but the faith of the leader was not echoed in the hearts of his followers. God wanted to create faith in them as well as to save them from the enemy. So he tested them. He well knew how many of them were cowards, and cowards are boasters. Had the whole army gone into the battle, and Midian been beaten, they would have boasted of their own might, and utterly forgotten God's power. Gideon would have given God the glory, but his men would not have done so. So God ordered the first test, which cut the cowards out of the army, and sent the boasters home.

We who serve God never dare forget the thing he taught Israel that day. There is no place for pride or vain-glory in his service.

GOD'S FURTHER TEST

The cowards were gone, but the army was still too large for God's purpose. He wanted only a small band for the battle, but that band must contain the choicest spirits in Israel, who would unflinchingly do their part while he did his. It was a severe test to which he intended to put them. They must be men of prudence, watchfulness, and self-restraint. To find these he ordered the second test by the well of Harod. The little stream that flowed from this well ran along the foot of the hill occupied by Gideon's army. Reeds and shrubs grew near it, easy places for an ambush. The men who flung themselves on the ground to drink deeply after the long day on the hillside under the burning Eastern sun, did not appreciate their danger, or the foe; those who crouched and dipped the water in one hand, holding their weapons in the other and watching meanwhile, were the men who could not be taken by surprise.

These men showed that duty, not self-indulgence, was the uppermost thing in their minds. They were the kind of men who could be relied on for the night attack against Midian. By such men, be they few or many, God conquers. Their object is not to

indulge themselves in the good of this world but to do some good in it. And they become God's chosen instruments. There always have been, and there are now, in his Church, such men and women, of unflinching faith, of earnest prayer and loyal devotion. As does the apostle, they count "all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." They are the true conquerors, who put the Midianites of every age to rout. And God honors them. It is better to be with God's minorities than with the world.

THE VICTORY IN THE DARK

It seemed like an impossible thing that Gideon attempted after he had sent the greater portion of his army home. To attack that host with three hundred men! Impossible. But why impossible? He had three factors on his side which meant success. He had a chosen company of determined, consecrated men. He had a carefully worked-out plan. And he had God. And when the darkness had covered the land and the great camp was still, he proceeded to carry out his plan by posting his three hundred men about the camp, each bearing a torch concealed in a pitcher, and with a trumpet. When Gideon gave the signal each man broke his pitcher and the torch flared out. Then each man blew his trumpet and shouted his battle cry. Cannot you imagine the effect on the enemy suddenly awakened, seeing the circle of torches around the camp, hearing the trumpets blown on every side

and the repeated battle cries? Immediately they imagined that they were surrounded by a great army, and fear took hold on their hearts, and they fled in the darkness. And as they fled they slew one another. So the land was delivered.

THE MISSIONARY MEANING OF THE STORY

Jesus has set before his Church the tremendous task of making this whole world Christian. This does not mean merely that men everywhere are to



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THE DEFEAT OF THE MIDIANITES

have the chance to hear of his claims on their life, but that they are to obey and follow. It seems impossible, just as the victory over Midian seemed impossible. But the factors that made that victory possible make possible the victory of Christianity over the world. Let us remember them—and use them—a determined band, consecrated to the great purpose, a carefully worked-out plan, and God.

THE LESSON'S WORDS AND PHRASES

2. **Vaunt.** To boast proudly.
4. **Water.** The little stream that ran from the spring.
6. **Lapped.** The men who dipped up the water in the hollow of one hand could hold their weapon ready in the other.
7. **His place.** His home.
16. **Torches.** Or firebrands with their light concealed in the pitchers.

QUESTIONS FOR INTERMEDIATE CLASSES

1. Why did Israel need a new deliverer?
2. Who were the Midianites? Where did they come from?
3. What was Gideon doing when God called him to rescue Israel?

4. Why did not Gideon use all the army in the battle?

5. Does God need a mighty host to save the world?

The Intermediate Catechism

Q. 22. What is the work of the Holy Spirit in us who believe?

A. The work of the Holy Spirit in us who believe is to give us hatred of sin and love of righteousness, knowledge of the truth, power for service, and assurance that we are children of God.

TOPICS FOR SENIOR DISCUSSION

1. Why did God test Gideon before he set him over Israel? Did God need the test before he was sure? What effect would it have on Gideon?
2. Why did God send the greater portion of the army of Israel home? After all are the great victories against evil won by the many or the few?
3. What part had God in the rout of Midian?

The Shorter Catechism

Q. 69. What is forbidden in the sixth commandment?

A. The sixth commandment forbiddeth the taking away of our own life, or the life of our neighbor unjustly, or whatsoever tendeth thereunto.

Lesson IV—RUTH'S WISE CHOICE

The Golden Text—"Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."—Ruth 1 : 16.

TEXT OF LESSON, RUTH 1 : 14-22

For entire lesson, see Ruth, ch. 1.

COMMON VERSION

14 And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Or'pah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her.

15 And she said, Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law.

16 And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God:

17 Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me.

18 When she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her.

19 ¶ So they two went until they came to Beth'le-hem. And it came to pass, when they were come to Beth'le-hem, that all the city was moved about them, and they said, Is this Na-o'mi?

20 And she said unto them, Call me not Na-o'mi,

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14 And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law; but Ruth clave unto her.

15 And she said, Behold, thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people, and unto her god: return thou after thy sister-in-law. 16 And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, and to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; 17 where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: Jehovah do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me. 18 And when she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, she left off speaking unto her.

19 So they two went until they came to Bethlehem. And it came to pass, when they were come to Bethlehem, that all the city was moved about them, and the women said, Is this Naomi? 20 And

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call me Ma'ra: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.

21 I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty: why *then* call ye me Na-o'mi, seeing the LORD hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?

22 So Na-o'mi returned, and Ruth the Mo-ab-i'tess, her daughter in law, with her, which returned out of the country of Mo'ab: and they came to Beth'le-hem in the beginning of barley harvest.

The Time—Sometime during the period of the Judges; just when we are not able to tell.

she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara; for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. 21 I went out full, and Jehovah hath brought me home again empty; why call ye me Naomi, seeing Jehovah hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me? 22 So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, with her, who returned out of the country of Moab: and they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of barley harvest.

The Places—1. Moab, the home of Ruth and Orpah, lay to the east of the Dead Sea and the southern Jordan. 2. Bethlehem was in the territory of the tribe of Judah, five miles south of Jerusalem.

DAILY HOME READINGS

DATE	TITLE	REFERENCE
Monday, April 19.....	Looking Toward Canaan.....	Ruth 1 : 1-10.
Tuesday, April 20.....	Ruth's Wise Choice.....	Ruth 1 : 14-22.
Wednesday, April 21.....	Ruth Gleaning.....	Ruth 2 : 1-12.
Thursday, April 22.....	Ruth Favored.....	Ruth 2 : 13-22.
Friday, April 23.....	A Kinsman Redeemer.....	Ruth 4 : 1-11.
Saturday, April 24.....	A Name in Israel.....	Ruth 4 : 14-22.
Sunday, April 25.....	The Promise and Our Responsibility.....	Heb., ch. 4.

THE STORY OF A GREAT DECISION

This is one of the most beautiful little stories in all of the world's literature. We ought to read at one sitting, not merely these few verses of the lesson but the whole book, and read it as carefully as we would read a favorite poem or story. Don't you think that we are apt to overlook the fact that this Bible, which tells us of God and God's way with men, is one of the most wonderful libraries of great literature that the world has? Sometimes I think of it as being like a Gothic church, both worshipful and beautiful. We ought to see both the worshipful and the beautiful.

Not only is this Book of Ruth beautiful, but it deals with the great decision that we all have to make, for God or against him. Sometimes we do not realize that we are making the decision when we do make it. Ruth said to Naomi that she would choose her and her God. And after all she was really thinking of Naomi more than of God. But in choosing her and the home in Bethlehem she chose Jehovah. So we, choosing to follow our conscience or our heart at some crisis, very often find that we have chosen God.

THE THINGS THAT LED UP TO THE CHOICE

The book begins with the tale of a famine which lasted several years. This was probably due to the Philistine invasion, which caused the land to lie uncultivated. In the village of Bethlehem lived Elimelech (God is King) and his wife, Naomi (Pleasant), with their two sons. They found it difficult to obtain a living on their farm because of the conditions in the land, and so determined to emigrate to some safer and more fruitful place. So they crossed the Jordan, probably at the fords

near Jericho, and, turning to the south, settled in the fertile country of the Moabites. Great changes came during the next ten years: the father died and, after the sons had married wives from among the Moabites, they, too, died. In the meantime conditions had improved in their homeland. The oppressors had been conquered and the people had turned to God. The heart of Naomi in its sorrow turned to the old places and to the comforts that her friends and the God of her fathers would bring. So she decided to return home. Her daughters-in-law went with her for a portion of the journey, as was the custom.

THE HALT AT THE CROSSROADS

If you have not read the whole Book of Ruth you ought by all means to read the verses of this first chapter, which lead up to the opening of the lesson, so as to have this connection clearly in mind. True, it does not tell us many things, but it tells us something. It tells about the advice that Naomi gave to her daughters-in-law. This was, briefly, to look out for themselves. Orpah followed the advice. Ruth did not. The reason for her choice is worth thinking about.

There was a big difference between the two daughters-in-law. Both had come under the influence of Naomi and had learned to love her. In both she had kindled heroic resolution, but only one kept this resolution. Orpah wept as she turned from Naomi, but nevertheless she turned, and went back to the old life and its customs and its heathen gods. Her kiss showed that she loved Naomi, but she did not love her enough to sacrifice for her sake the old, dear things. In such a way many treat Christ. They have a certain affection for him,

and yet they fail to go with him because they are not willing to give up other things for his sake. We are reminded of the young man who went away sorrowful—but he went away. He had to give up something, so he gave up Christ. Bunyan, in his great study of the motives of a man's life, "The Pilgrim's Progress," describes Christian and his neighbors starting for the Celestial City. But only Christian goes on, Obstinate and Pliable returning to the City of Destruction. They did the easiest thing, as did Orpah. A safe prayer for the growing Christian is, "Lord, keep me from the easiest thing."

RUTH'S CHOICE

Ruth chose the hard thing. Moab was her own land and she knew its ways. Naomi's country was a new land to her, and she did not know what fortune awaited her there. But she did know Naomi, and she was willing to follow her. Notice that she does not choose Jehovah or Israel, but "thy God" and "thy people." She loved Naomi so fully and trusted her so completely that she was ready to give up everything in the assurance that Naomi's things were the best things. Do we appreciate the value of love as a missionary force? Ruth came to believe in Jehovah, came to be the mother of Jehovah's covenant kings, because she had been won from Moab and Moab's idolatry by Naomi's love. So it ever is. We can be sure that the reason the first disciples followed Jesus was that they loved him. Can we not be-

lieve that John was startlingly insistent that those who love God should also love men because he was sure this was the way they could most surely commend God to men? Truly love is the great Christian obligation. It may show itself in a very humble way, in the letters we write and the looks we wear, in the journeys we take, in patience with those who are thankless, in endurance of slights, in acts of kindness. But it tells, and it tells for Christ, as Naomi's deeds through the years told on Ruth.

When Ruth made her choice she made it for everything. In words of peculiar beauty, which everyone who reads the Bible knows, she expresses her decision. "Thy going, thy lodging, thy people, thy God, thy place of burying, all shall be mine." That is no choice which is less. Ever since that choice the obscure Moabite girl has been the type of the resolute convert, whose devotion to God includes the taking of God's people as his people, faring as they fare, lodging as they lodge, enduring what they endure, carrying the same cross, dying if need be, as they die. Men and women have read her resolution and have been inspired to copy it in their lives. If the world's

heroes and heroines are they whose deeds move others to finer devotion, surely Ruth's name must be given high rank among them. Yet, like every real heroine, she never gave this a thought, but followed merely the path of duty as love gave her light. Then, as Tennyson reminds us:



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RUTH AND NAOMI

heroes and heroines are they whose deeds move others to finer devotion, surely Ruth's name must be given high rank among them. Yet, like every real heroine, she never gave this a thought, but followed merely the path of duty as love gave her light. Then, as Tennyson reminds us:

Not once or twice in our rough-island story
The path of duty was the way of glory.

BITTER OR SWEET

When Naomi came at last to the little city of her fathers that she had left so many years before, the natural reaction seems to have taken place. She had left it a wife and a mother. She came home a widow and childless. No wonder she felt as if her name did not fit her, that instead of being called "Pleasant," she should be called "Bitter." But in this she was mistaken. God had other blessings in store for her, and rich content. The book tells the rest of the story, which is another reason for you to read it. They came back at the time of the barley harvest and Ruth went forth to the gleaning. Israel had a law, given among those of the great lawgiver, requiring that the landowner should not glean the fields too carefully in the harvest, but should leave a portion for the poor who were willing to help themselves by working in this way. So Ruth gleaned in the fields of Boaz, and so she supported herself and Naomi. The story tells how, as she did this, she won the favor of Boaz and became his wife. We know very little about Boaz, but what we do know indicates that he was a fine type of man. From this marriage sprang Israel's royal house. Among Ruth's descendants were numbered the great kings, David and Solomon, but also a greater than they, even he who was born in that same Bethlehem to be the Saviour of the world. God's blessings upon goodness do not always include the riches of the earth and the mothering of kings, but they do include riches of spirit and place among those known as his friends.

THE LESSON'S WORDS AND PHRASES

14. **Lifted up their voice.** Cried with a loud lament. **Clave.** Clung to her.
18. **Stedfastly minded.** Determined.
19. **The city was moved.** Their return caused a great excitement.

20. **Naomi.** Meaning "pleasant." **Mara.** Meaning "bitter."

21. **Full.** Her family was with her.

QUESTIONS FOR INTERMEDIATE CLASSES

1. What had caused the famine in Bethlehem?
2. Why did Naomi want to go home?
3. Why do you think Orpah turned back to Moab?
4. What was the real reason that Ruth followed Naomi? How can we use the same motive to extend Christ's Kingdom?

The Intermediate Catechism

Q. 23. What is the duty and privilege of those who believe on Jesus Christ?

A. The duty and privilege of those who believe on Jesus Christ is to confess him before men and to come into the full communion of the Church.

TOPICS FOR SENIOR STUDY

1. What is the essential difference between the characters of Orpah and of Ruth?
2. From what the story tells about her, what would you say was the thing about Naomi that caused Ruth to follow her?
3. How far can love be made a missionary instrument?
4. Ruth had her reward. Does right living always have a reward?

The Shorter Catechism

Q. 70. Which is the seventh commandment?

A. The seventh commandment is, Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Q. 71. What is required in the seventh commandment?

A. The seventh commandment requireth the preservation of our own and our neighbor's chastity, in heart, speech, and behavior.

Q. 72. What is forbidden in the seventh commandment?

A. The seventh commandment forbiddeth all unchaste thoughts, words, and actions.

Lesson V—THE BOY SAMUEL

The Golden Text—"My son, give me thy heart; and let thine eyes delight in my ways."—Prov. 23 :26.

TEXT OF LESSON, I SAM. 3: 1-13, 19, 20

For entire lesson, see I Sam. 1: 24-28; ch. 3.

COMMON VERSION

1 And the child Sam'u-el ministered unto the LORD before E'li. And the word of the LORD was precious in those days; *there was* no open vision.

2 And it came to pass at that time, when E'li *was* laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, *that* he could not see;

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1 And the child Samuel ministered unto Jehovah before Eli. And the word of Jehovah was precious in those days; there was no frequent vision. 2 And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place, (now his eyes had begun to wax dim, so that he could not see,) 3 and the lamp

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3 And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was, and Sam'u-el was laid down to sleep;

4 That the LORD called Sam'u-el: and he answered, Here am I.

5 And he ran unto E'li, and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down.

6 And the LORD called yet again, Sam'u-el. And Sam'u-el arose and went to E'li, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And he answered, I called not, my son; lie down again.

7 Now Sam'u-el did not yet know the LORD, neither was the word of the LORD yet revealed unto him.

8 And the LORD called Sam'u-el again the third time. And he arose and went to E'li, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And E'li perceived that the LORD had called the child.

9 Therefore E'li said unto Sam'u-el, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth. So Sam'u-el went and lay down in his place.

10 And the LORD came and stood, and called as at other times, Sam'u-el, Sam'u-el. Then Sam'u-el answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth.

11 ¶ And the LORD said to Sam'u-el, Behold, I will do a thing in Is'ra-el, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle.

12 In that day I will perform against E'li all things which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end.

13 For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.

19 ¶ And Sam'u-el grew, and the LORD was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground.

20 And all Is'ra-el from Dan even to Be'er-she-ba knew that Sam'u-el was established to be a prophet of the LORD.

of God was not yet gone out, and Samuel was laid down to sleep, in the temple of Jehovah, where the ark of God was; 4 that Jehovah called Samuel: and he said, Here am I. 5 And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down. 6 And Jehovah called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me. And he answered, I called not, my son; lie down again. 7 Now Samuel did not yet know Jehovah, neither was the word of Jehovah yet revealed unto him. 8 And Jehovah called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me. And Eli perceived that Jehovah had called the child. 9 Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, Jehovah; for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

10 And Jehovah came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel said, Speak; for thy servant heareth. 11 And Jehovah said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. 12 In that day I will perform against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from the beginning even unto the end. 13 For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons did bring a curse upon themselves, and he restrained them not.

19 And Samuel grew, and Jehovah was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground.

20 And all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of Jehovah.

Additional Passage for Study: I Sam. 1: 1 to 2: 21.

The Time—About 1160 B.C.

The Place—Shiloh, which means "The Place of Tranquillity" is north of Bethel, on the highway running to Shechem.

DAILY HOME READINGS

DATE	TITLE	REFERENCE
Monday, April 26.....	Samuel Given, and Lent to the Lord.....	I Sam. 1: 9-18, 27, 28.
Tuesday, April 27.....	Hannah's Thanksgiving.....	I Sam. 2: 1-11.
Wednesday, April 28.....	Samuel Serving Eli.....	I Sam. 2: 18-20, 26.
Thursday, April 29.....	The Call of the Boy Samuel.....	I Sam. 3: 1-13, 19, 20.
Friday, April 30.....	Jesus Calling Disciples.....	Mark 1: 14-20.
Saturday, May 1.....	Paul's Account of His Call.....	Acts 26: 15-20.
Sunday, May 2.....	Paul's Charge to Timothy.....	II Tim. 4: 1-8.

A CHANGING TIME IN ISRAEL

During the many years that had elapsed since the conquest of the land by the armies of Joshua, Israel had been led by judges. We have been studying about some of these judges. Now we are to think about the last and the greatest of them, Samuel. Under him the judgeship attained to its greatest power and dignity, and also came to its end. His history was filled with interest and instruction. In whatever light we see him, whether as a boy just entering the service of God or as a man clothed with the highest honor of the Hebrew state and administering justice through a long and noble life, he is always the object of our admiration and love. As we read the story of his life we cannot fail to see how intimate was the connection of his character with the life of his mother.

THE MOTHER'S INFLUENCE ON THE NEW LEADER

Everyone who is familiar with the story of Abraham Lincoln is also familiar with the great influence his mother had in making him what he was. The story is repeated over and over again in the lives of the world's great men. It was a mother's prayers and faith that turned Augustine from a dissipated youth into the greatest leader of Christian thought of his age, and it was a mother's prayers and faith that had the largest part in the shaping of this leader Samuel, who was to mold Israel into new forms and prepare her for her new day.

Hannah had suffered a great disappointment. She was childless. She might have kept turning this disappointment over in her heart until her whole life was embittered, but instead of doing so, she took her sorrow to the Lord. When faith does this, in some way or other, it gets Hannah's answer. But to learn to do this is not easy. When one does learn to do it, great results follow. It is certain that Samuel would never have been what he was—God's good man for Israel's need—if Hannah's faith

had not grown great. He learned faith at his mother's knee, as she learned it by fighting hard against the things that would have cast her down.

THE TRAINING IN THE HOLY PLACE

Hannah's prayer was answered in the birth of her son, and, obedient to her promise, she brought him to God's house, to be trained thoroughly for God's service. Not only was he to have the heritage of his mother's faith and prayers, but the constant inspiration of dwelling among holy things. His boy-

hood was to be lived in the holy place. The belief that, if a man is to be of largest use in the world, he ought to have some knowledge of evil in his youth, is one of the persistent follies of men. The argument is that this is a sort of moral vaccination. But whatever be the value of vaccination in the realm of physical disease, there is no question of its harmfulness in morals. That man is best whose heart was never soiled.

"Be a good man," was Walter Scott's last message to Lockhart. The words should be burned into every parent's thinking and on every boy's heart. God did not train Jesus Christ in the worldly city of Jerusalem, but in a pious home at Nazareth. So in Israel's darkest hour God prepared her new leader in the holy place at Shiloh. And it was a dark hour in Israel. Eli, the high priest, was a good man, but he lacked backbone. God had raised him to a high place. He himself seems to have been a clean man, but he could not,

or did not, control his family. "His sons did bring a curse upon themselves, and he restrained them not." In consequence of the wickedness of the priests there was widespread dissatisfaction among the people, and they neglected the house of God. So God made ready to displace the priests, and raise up one who would be worthy of honor.

THE CALL OF THE NEW LEADER

The call of the new leader was in a vision of



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THE BOY SAMUEL

the night. Eli and Samuel were sleeping in the high priest's quarters, close to the tabernacle. Samuel heard his name called, as he supposed, by Eli. On going to the high priest he found that it was not he who had called. A second and a third time this was repeated. At the third call Eli perceived that this was a call from God, and meant a revelation to the child. Therefore he charged Samuel to answer if the voice spoke the fourth time, "Speak, Jehovah; for thy servant heareth." When Samuel did as he was told, there came to him a revelation of God's purpose toward the house of Eli. From that night Samuel became God's prophet, whose honor grew in Israel, and who was increasingly obeyed by the people as representing the will of Jehovah.

A NEW ORDER UNDER THE NEW LEADER

This divine call of Samuel was the beginning of a new order of things in Israel. From the time that the Israelites had erected the tabernacle, after the settlement in Canaan, God had revealed his will to his people through the high priest. It was he who wore the breastplate, where shone the Urim and Thummim, and from these he was able to receive answers from God to questions about national duty. But the high priests seem to have shared in the degeneracy of Israel. From this time on the high priest was made secondary, and the prophet became first in authority in Israel. The Urim and Thummim did not entirely cease as God's oracle, but their response was infrequent, and the bearers of the breastplate did not have their old place.

Samuel ushers in a long and distinguished list of men—the prophets. Few men have so impressed the world as they. Ordinary men we would call them, but they are the great preachers of righteousness to all ages. The philosophers of Greece, the finest product of the most gracious culture of the past, have made a great impression on all ages since, but their work is not so vital to life as that of the humble leaders of whom this boy of Shiloh was the first. The reason they were great and did great things is that God filled them.

Certain names applied to the prophet in the Bible suggest ideas entertained of him. One of the oldest and most common is "man of God." 11 Kings 4: 7, 9, 16. The name implies a close relation to God, and it "suggests both the ethical basis of prophecy and the religiousness of the prophet." The prophet's call was not an appointment to an office, but to a life task, even as the Christian's call is not to a peculiar dignity, but to a life of service of God. Another name is often used, "servant of God." Neh. 10: 29. God has commissioned him, he wears God's livery, and he is able to stand before kings and common folk unafraid, because God's power is with his servants. A third and rarer name is "interpreter." Job 33: 23. God speaks to men in the events of life, which the prophet interprets. The inspiration which God has given him enables him to see a more profound meaning in the events

than they appear to contain. He sees them issuing in that perfection which is to be, and so predicts the things which are to be. The prophets were the great heralds of Christ, preparing the way for his coming. Filled with God's spirit, clothed with God's power, they ever repeated his demand for obedience, that men should do justly, and love kindness, and walk humbly with their God. Micah 6: 8. In thinking of the service and the influence on men's lives of Samuel and his successors, we must not forget that Jesus said of the last and greatest of them, John the Baptist, "He that is but little in the kingdom of God is greater than he." We who know God in Christ have a greater call and a greater opportunity than any prophet had in the olden days.

THE NEED OF LEADERS TO-DAY

Sometimes we do not realize how big a change the World War has made in our life. We know that it has caused the prices of things to be higher, that it has changed the boundaries of many lands, that it has brought the whole world closer together. But the changes have been greater than any of these things tell. Many old things have passed, never to come back. Many new things will come. There are some who worry about these changes and think them bad. But that is God's way by which the world goes forward. I do not mean that war is God's way, but change is God's way. You remember how Tennyson expresses it:

The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfills himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.

Or, as the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews puts it, Heb. 12: 26, 27: "Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more will I make to tremble not the earth only, but also the heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that have been made, that those things which are not shaken may remain." What we need more than anything else during these coming years, as this change continues, is men and women who believe in God more than they believe in anything else, and who will be able to shape and lead these changes for God's glory and for the good of men. We are accustomed to hear that leaders are needed. We hear it so often that our ears grow dull to the sound of it. But we dare not be heedless now. Just as God needed Samuel, so he needs you who are studying this lesson. He will not call you as he called Samuel, with a voice in the night. But he calls you with the mighty voice of the world's need, the world that must have God or it will die. We who have our lives before us must do for our city, our village, our world, just exactly what Samuel did for his people. You are not ready for this work now. Neither was Samuel when he heard the voice in the night. He had to grow (see v. 19), he had to study, he had to listen

closely to what God had to say in many ways. So must we do. The one important thing to be faced to-day is whether we are going to answer God's call and say, "Speak, . . . for thy servant heareth."

THE LESSON'S WORDS AND PHRASES

1. Precious. Rare. Frequent vision. There was no prophet through whom God communicated his will.

8. Lamp of God. The seven-branched lamp stand in the Holy Place.

7. Did not yet know Jehovah. This was before Jehovah began his revelations to Samuel.

10. Jehovah came, and stood. Probably the angel of the presence.

13. Iniquity. The evil conditions which Eli permitted.

19. Jehovah was with him. Jehovah guided and blessed him.

QUESTIONS FOR INTERMEDIATES

1. Can you name some of the judges besides Samuel?

2. What effect does a good mother have on a boy's life? Can you illustrate with some other lives than that of Samuel? What should this mean so far as your mother is concerned?

3. Why did God plan to put another leader in the place of Eli? What part has backbone in religion?

4. What did the prophets do in Israel? Can you name some of them? Who are called to be God's prophets to-day?

The Intermediate Catechism

Q. 24. Is there more than one Church?

A. There is only one Church, in which all the saved, in heaven and on earth, are included, and of which Jesus Christ is the Head.

Q. 25. What is the Church on earth?

A. The Church on earth is the whole body of those who confess Christ as Lord and Saviour, together with their children.

TOPICS FOR SENIOR STUDY

1. What is the influence of heredity on the ordinary life? Suppose that a man does not have a good mother such as Samuel had; does that lessen his responsibility?

2. Study the titles that are applied to the prophets in the Scriptures. How many of the functions that these names imply must be performed by the prophets whom this age needs?

3. If God no longer calls men in the night, how does he call them? For what does he call them?

The Shorter Catechism

Q. 73. Which is the eighth commandment?

A. The eighth commandment is, Thou shalt not steal.

Q. 74. What is required in the eighth commandment?

A. The eighth commandment requireth the lawful procuring and furthering the wealth and outward estate of ourselves and others.

Lesson VI—ELI AND HIS SONS

(May be used with temperance applications)

The Golden Text—"The wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."—Rom. 6: 23.

TEXT OF LESSON, I SAM. 4: 5-18

For entire lesson, see I Sam. 2: 12-17; 4: 1-18.

COMMON VERSION

5 And when the ark of the covenant of the LORD came into the camp, all Is'ra-el shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again.

6 And when the Phi-lis'tines heard the noise of the shout, they said, What *meaneth* the noise of this great shout in the camp of the He'brews? And they understood that the ark of the LORD was come into the camp.

7 And the Phi-lis'tines were afraid, for they said, God is come into the camp. And they said, Woe unto us! for there hath not been such a thing heretofore.

8 Woe unto us! who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty Gods? these *are* the Gods that

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5 And when the ark of the covenant of Jehovah came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again. 6 And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, What *meaneth* the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews? And they understood that the ark of Jehovah was come into the camp. 7 And the Philistines were afraid, for they said, God is come into the camp. And they said, Woe unto us! for there hath not been such a thing heretofore. 8 Woe unto us! who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty gods? these are the gods that smote the Egyptians with all manner of

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smote the E-gyp'tians with all the plagues in the wilderness.

9 Be strong, and quit yourselves like men, O ye Phi-lis'tines, that ye be not servants unto the He'brews, as they have been to you: quit yourselves like men, and fight.

10 ¶ And the Phi-lis'tines fought, and Is'ra-el was smitten, and they fled every man into his tent: and there was a very great slaughter; for there fell of Is'ra-el thirty thousand footmen.

11 And the ark of God was taken; and the two sons of E'li, Hoph'ni and Phin'e-has, were slain.

12 ¶ And there ran a man of Ben'ja-min out of the army, and came to Shi'loh the same day with his clothes rent, and with earth upon his head.

13 And when he came, lo, E'li sat upon a seat by the wayside watching: for his heart trembled for the ark of God. And when the man came into the city, and told it, all the city cried out.

14 And when E'li heard the noise of the crying, he said, What *meaneth* the noise of this tumult? And the man came in hastily, and told E'li.

15 Now E'li was ninety and eight years old; and his eyes were dim, that he could not see.

16 And the man said unto E'li, I *am* he that came out of the army, and I fled to day out of the army. And he said, What is there done, my son?

17 And the messenger answered and said, Is'ra-el is fled before the Phi-lis'tines, and there hath been also a great slaughter among the people, and thy two sons also, Hoph'ni and Phin'e-has, are dead, and the ark of God is taken.

18 And it came to pass, when he made mention of the ark of God, that he fell from off the seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck brake, and he died: for he was an old man, and heavy. And he had judged Is'ra-el forty years.

plagues in the wilderness. 9 Be strong, and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines, that ye be not servants unto the Hebrews, as they have been to you: quit yourselves like men, and fight. 10 And the Philistines fought, and Israel was smitten, and they fled every man to his tent: and there was a very great slaughter; for there fell of Israel thirty thousand footmen. 11 And the ark of God was taken; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain.

12 And there ran a man of Benjamin out of the army, and came to Shiloh the same day, with his clothes rent, and with earth upon his head. 13 And when he came, lo, Eli was sitting upon his seat by the wayside watching; for his heart trembled for the ark of God. And when the man came into the city, and told it, all the city cried out. 14 And when Eli heard the noise of the crying, he said, What meaneth the noise of this tumult? And the man hastened, and came and told Eli. 15 Now Eli was ninety and eight years old; and his eyes were set, so that he could not see. 16 And the man said unto Eli, I am he that came out of the army, and I fled to-day out of the army. And he said, How went the matter, my son? 17 And he that brought the tidings answered and said, Israel is fled before the Philistines, and there hath been also a great slaughter among the people, and thy two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God is taken. 18 And it came to pass, when he made mention of the ark of God, that *Eli* fell from off his seat backward by the side of the gate; and his neck brake and he died: for he was an old man, and heavy. And he had judged Israel forty years.

The Places—Shiloh. Aphek, the place where the battle was fought, is supposed to be near the head of the Vale of Sorek.

The Time—About 1142 B.C.

DAILY HOME READINGS

DATE	TITLE	REFERENCE
Monday, May 3.....	Sin of Eli's Sons.....	I Sam. 2: 12-17.
Tuesday, May 4.....	Prophecy Concerning Eli's Sons.....	I Sam. 2: 27-36.
Wednesday, May 5.....	Eli and His Sons.....	I Sam. 4: 5-18.
Thursday, May 6.....	Value of a Good Name.....	Prov. 22: 1-12.
Friday, May 7.....	A Wise Son.....	Prov. 10: 1-16.
Saturday, May 8.....	Sowing and Reaping.....	Gal. 6: 6-13.
Sunday, May 9.....	Evils of Intemperance.....	Prov. 23: 29-35.

WHEN THE ARK BECAME A CHARM

This history of Israel is silent about the Philistines from the day of Samson's death, when he carried down to destruction with him so many of their lords and great men, until this time, when they came up again to Israel for one of their great raids. It was a raid which was to bring great loss to Israel, and woe to thousands of homes, because

of the men who fell in battle. Yet in no other way, apparently, could Israel be brought to see her duty.

The leaders of Israel prepared to meet the invaders. Among the strange things they did was the sending of the Ark to Shiloh. There is no reason to suppose from the narrative that God was consulted about this, through his mouthpiece the old high priest Eli, or his new prophet Samuel. In

fact the name of Samuel is conspicuously absent from the story, except in the first verse, which seems rightly to belong to the narrative of the preceding chapter. Nor can we see any real religious motive in the action, such as characterized Moses' use of the Ark, in Num. 10: 35, "It came to pass, when the ark set forward, that Moses said, Rise up, O Jehovah, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee." There God's guiding was clear, for the cloud of his presence rose and went before the host. But these elders of Israel had ceased to be religious, and had become superstitious. They thought that the Ark, which was the symbol of God's presence, was just as good as the reality. If the Ark were carried into the battle it would produce the same results as if God himself were there before the hosts. Their enemies seem to have had the same idea. The shout with which the Israelites welcomed the coming of the Ark struck terror into the hearts of the Philistines. This was to be expected in them, for their religion was a pure superstition. But they recovered from their panic and fought all the harder.

As the battle raged the hope of the misguided leaders of Israel turned out to be hollow. The symbol of God was not God himself. He was not fighting for Israel that day. And in the dreadful defeat that followed, the Ark was taken and thirty thousand Israelites were slain.

Superstition has not altogether passed from the minds of men. Even in our time, when Christ's gospel has been preached for nineteen hundred years, men still confuse the symbol with the reality. The Bible is God's Word, given to us for our instruction and guidance. Yet men have used it many times in a way just as superstitious as these leaders used the Ark. A man builds a new house, and in order that he may have good luck in it, the first article he carries into it is a Bible. We read with awe of how a Bible, carried in a soldier's pocket, stopped a bullet. But should we carry a Bible with that purpose in mind? It is blind superstition to make a charm out of the Book which carries to men the message of God. It is not the book, but the message, which has power.

Too often the same thing is true of our idea of the sacraments. The dying man thinks that if he can only receive the Lord's Supper he will be carried safely through the Valley of the Shadow. Many men believe that all that is necessary for salvation is to be baptized and to take communion. It is a survival of the idea which Israel's elders held. The Ark was the symbol of God's presence. The sacraments of the Christian Church, also, are symbols of very glorious realities, and where these symbols are used as God commanded, the realities will be surely enjoyed. But God's commands are not to look to the Ark nor the Bible nor to the sacraments, but "Look unto me, and be ye saved." Israel's hope was not in the Ark, but in God. Our hope is in nothing but Christ, and religion becomes superstition when it substitutes anything for him.

THE MAN WHO FAILED

It is perhaps fair to say that the one man who more than any other was responsible for this condition of affairs was Eli. He was the high priest of Israel, the official head of the organized church. In his hands was the task of so directing the religious life of Israel as to keep it vital. Of course the people of Israel could follow him or not, just as they pleased. Eli was not responsible for results, but he was responsible for being more in earnest in his efforts than he seems to have been. When a man's religion lacks moral earnestness it is likely to become a mockery and an empty show. This father fell a victim to the sins of his sons, we say. But were they not his own sins, for did they not become his sins when he made no effort to hinder his sons at the right time and in the right way? Among all the Bible narratives none is more instructive than the short, sad biography of Eli. We cannot fold our hands or shut our eyes and let everything go wrong without ourselves suffering in the end.

A PERTINENT PARABLE OF JESUS

The parable of Jesus concerning the house that was built upon the sand, Matt. 7: 26, 27, embodies an eternal principle—that outward appearance is not the final test. Eli looked good. Clothed in his priestly robes, he was a venerable figure. For forty years he had occupied the foremost place in Israel, and in that time he had manifested many good qualities. He had loved God's service and had given himself to the duties of the high priesthood with seeming diligence. He had displayed a rare generosity in his dealing with the boy Samuel, although he knew that Samuel was to supplant him as leader in Israel. There was no trace of meanness or jealousy in the way he treated him. On the contrary, he did all that he could to prepare Samuel for his life work. He had that finest of courage, the courage to listen to the truth, though that truth cut deep. This is proved in what he said to Samuel. "I pray thee, hide it not from me: God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide any thing from me of all the things that he spake unto thee."

But no matter how fine the material be that enters into the house, the house is valueless unless it is stably founded. Eli lacked those qualities which make a man steadfast. He himself was a good man, but he had no passion for righteousness. His was a complacent soul, when his time and his task demanded a soul on fire for the pure and the true. Besides this, he lacked will power. When he received from God the warnings of his weaknesses and the evils that would follow them, he made no determined effort to do his duty. No doubt he wrung his hands, and wept salt tears, when he should have seized his task with resolute hands and accomplished it. But the place where his weakness was shown most disgracefully was in the management of his own family. His sons had been in-

trusted by him with high office in Israel, but he had not trained them for their work by the discipline they needed. Happy is that family whose father plants the fear of God in his sons. The sins and follies that broke Eli's heart and ruined Israel might all have been avoided had Eli been a man, firm in the doing of duty, no matter how hard it was.

A FATHER'S FAILURE MEANT HIS SONS' WICKEDNESS

If Hannah, Samuel's mother, be a model for mothers, Eli is a beacon for fathers. This man of good impulses, but poor performances, was to find himself drawn down into the ruin that his own complacency caused. So great had the wickedness of his sons become that the writer of the book calls them "base men," using a term which is frequently employed by Hebrew writers of this period to denote men of extreme wickedness, sinners of the deepest dye. The sons used their office to commit that which was not merely theft, but sacrilege. When the people came with their offerings the sons of Eli appropriated for themselves all they could get their hands on. Consequently the people despised and mistrusted them. Because the people despised the priests they came to despise the tabernacle and to deny to Jehovah his due worship. "Men despised the offering of Jehovah."

But the priests committed far viler offenses than these. They used their priestly office to satisfy their lust. Their practices were unspeakably vile. Eli, shut up in his complacency, seems to have been unaware of all their doings. Far too late in life he came to know their wickedness, too late to change the lives he should have trained to other things. Impotence is written large all over him as he summons them before him. Impotence sounds in his rebuke, the rebuke that came too late. "He did not attempt to bend the twig, but laid vain hold, with palsied hands, of the deep-rooted and full-grown tree."

We must not let a sin grow to its full size before we try to get rid of it. In the deep woods a tree grew on top of a huge rock, full-grown and tall as any of the great trees about. Its mighty roots, thick as a man's thigh, held that rock in strong embrace as they followed down its sides to seek the ground. Once a baby's fingers could have plucked the tiny seedling from the cleft in the rock where it was born, but not even the strength of Hercules could make the slightest impression upon it then. It was too late. And not only was Eli too late, but he was too lenient. When his sons stood before him, and he charged them with their sins, the words of his rebuke were as weak as water. As Matthew Henry puts it, "There was no edge to his reproofs." Instead of a righteous condemnation of their crimes, accompanied by immediate removal from their office, and a punishment that would have been a warning to Israel, he contented himself with spineless words. This is not always the way we

treat others, but it is the way we are apt to deal with ourselves, and with our own faults. We pray penitently over our sins and faults, but we do not seek to get rid of them with strong hands.

We know that we must fight hard and pray hard if we would overcome, but we do not always follow the knowledge with the deed. Paul in one of his Epistles uses a fine figure for prevailing prayer. He describes to his friends his prayers for them as being like the strenuous striving of the wrestler on the ribbed floor of the gymnasium, every ounce of strength going into the endeavor to win. That is the way we must pray if we would win against our baser selves. So Jesus prayed in his hours of temptation to do the lesser thing. Witness the agony under the olives of Gethsemane, when drops of blood stood like sweat on his face. It is the man of strong intention who wins the fight. When Cæsar saw Brutus for the first time and heard him plead in the forum, he said, "Yon youth is destined to make his mark, because he intends strongly." When a man intends strongly and prays strongly, he does not dally with sin.

THE RESULTS OF ELI'S WEAKNESS

The results of Eli's failure were wide-reaching. They affected him personally, but they affected many others. That is one of the worst things about sin; its effects scatter so widely. A little girl went into a neighbor's house, where she had been forbidden to go because of the presence of a contagious disease. She herself contracted the disease, which was bad enough. But she gave it to every other member of her family and in consequence there were in that household weeks of intense suffering and great anxiety. No one of us lives to himself, but our lives touch many other lives daily, for either weal or woe.

The results of this sin of Eli's were threefold. First, the nation was affected. Its armies were defeated in battle, and an immense host was slain. In thirty thousand homes in Israel there was sorrow and mourning for a soldier who had fallen. Some of us with the memories of the Great War still fresh will understand what this meant. Then Israel became a subject nation, subject to the will of her enemies, the Philistines. Many years passed before Israel was freed from this oppression. The presence of that God whom Israel had forgotten because Eli had failed to guide as he ought, had departed from his people, and they were to be left alone until they came to see and understand.

Then the sin had its more immediate effect on Eli's own life. The sons, with whom he had been too lenient, fell in the day of the battle. And wicked though they were, they were still his sons. When the word was brought to him that they had been slain, that Israel had been defeated, that the Ark had been taken, Eli, who had waited in anxiety for the news, fell backward from his seat and died. The ruin that had fallen on his land engulfed him.

HOW FAR DO A MAN'S SINS AFFECT HIS NATION?

The point in this story is the effect of a man's life on his time. Eli was of course not the only man who sinned in Israel, but because of his position of leadership his sins counted heavily in bringing about the ruin of the land. Yet every man's and woman's life, every boy's and girl's life, has its effect on the world, either for good or for evil. Don't you remember how, during the War, our country taught us the need of doing each our full part? Everyone who could fight ought to fight. And they who could not fight must help with the Red Cross or one of the other War activities, or buy Liberty Bonds, or save food and coal. The help of everyone was necessary if we were going to win the War. The reason was that the leaders of the country knew that every life was important in the achieving of the result. One man in a community who held back would affect other lives, and the community would not do its part. We are curiously linked together in this world. If we live high and unselfish lives we help our nation to be right. If we live selfish and sinful lives we help to pull the nation down. There is nothing in these days of change and stress that we Americans need so much to remember as that bit of wisdom which the Westminster fathers put at the very beginning of the Shorter Catechism, "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever." Eli forgot that truth and his nation suffered. Will we remember?

THE LESSON'S WORDS AND PHRASES

5. The ark of the covenant of Jehovah. This was the sacred chest which Moses had constructed and about which the presence of God was supposed to dwell peculiarly. It was ordinarily kept in the holiest place in the tabernacle.

8. Gods. The Philistines were accustomed to worship many gods and apparently thought that Israel did likewise.

10. Footmen. Foot-soldiers, or infantry.

12. With his clothes rent, and with earth upon his head. The familiar symbols of great sorrow.

QUESTIONS FOR INTERMEDIATE CLASSES

1. Who were the Philistines?
2. What was the Ark of the Covenant? Why did the leaders carry it up to the battle?
3. What do you think were the reasons for Eli's failure? Was he too good-natured? What is the connection between him and the teaching of Jesus' parable about the house built on the sand?
4. Were Hophni and Phinehas not responsible because their father had failed? Are we not responsible if our fathers have failed?
5. What effect does the good or evil of a single life have on a nation?

The Intermediate Catechism

Q. 26. What is the great work of the Church on earth?

A. The great work of the Church on earth is to bear witness to Jesus Christ and so to advance the kingdom of God.

FOR SENIOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. When does religion break down and become superstition? What are the things that we to-day are in danger of using as these men used the Ark?
2. Discuss the character of Eli. Is a good man who has no great passion for righteousness a good man after all? Is complacency not a peril to character? Is it not also a stumblingblock to duty?
3. How far does a man's life affect his country? What is the greatest safeguard to a country, a large army or a citizenship devoted to the things that are pure and high and Christian?

The Shorter Catechism

Q. 75. What is forbidden in the eighth commandment?

A. The eighth commandment forbiddeth whatsoever doth, or may, unjustly hinder our own, or our neighbor's, wealth or outward estate.

Lesson VII—VICTORY UNDER SAMUEL

The Golden Text—"Direct your hearts unto Jehovah, and serve him only."—I Sam. 7:3.

TEXT OF LESSON, I SAM. 7: 2-12

For entire lesson, see I Sam. 7: 2-17.

COMMON VERSION

2 And it came to pass, while the ark abode in Kir-jath-je'a-rim, that the time was long; for it was twenty years: and all the house of Is'ra-el lamented after the LORD.

3 ¶ And Sam'u-el spake unto all the house of Is'ra-el, saying, If ye do return unto the LORD with

AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE¹

2 And it came to pass, from the day that the ark abode in Kiriath-jearim, that the time was long; for it was twenty years: and all the house of Israel lamented after Jehovah.

3 And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel,

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all your hearts, *then* put away the strange gods and Ash'ta-roth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the LORD, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Phi-lis'tines.

4 Then the children of Is'ra-el did put away Ba'al-im and Ash'ta-roth, and served the LORD only.

5 And Sam'u-el said, Gather all Is'ra-el to Miz'peh, and I will pray for you unto the LORD.

6 And they gathered together to Miz'peh, and drew water, and poured *it* out before the LORD, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the LORD. And Sam'u-el judged the children of Is'ra-el in Miz'peh.

7 And when the Phi-lis'tines heard that the children of Is'ra-el were gathered together to Miz'peh, the lords of the Phi-lis'tines went up against Is'ra-el. And when the children of Is'ra-el heard *it*, they were afraid of the Phi-lis'tines.

8 And the children of Is'ra-el said to Sam'u-el, Cease not to cry unto the LORD our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philis'tines.

9 ¶ And Sam'u-el took a sucking lamb, and offered *it* for a burnt offering wholly unto the LORD: and Sam'u-el cried unto the LORD for Is'ra-el; and the LORD heard him.

10 And as Sam'u-el was offering up the burnt offering, the Phi-lis'tines drew near to battle against Is'ra-el: but the LORD thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Phi-lis'tines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Is'ra-el.

11 And the men of Is'ra-el went out of Miz'peh, and pursued the Phi-lis'tines, and smote them, until *they came* under Beth'-car.

12 Then Sam'u-el took a stone, and set *it* between Miz'peh and Shen, and called the name of it Eb-en-e'zer, saying, Hitherto hath the LORD helped us.

saying, If ye do return unto Jehovah with all your heart, then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtaroth from among you, and direct your hearts unto Jehovah, and serve him only; and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines. 4 Then the children of Israel did put away the Ba'alim and the Ashtaroth, and served Jehovah only.

5 And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpah, and I will pray for you unto Jehovah. 6 And they gathered together to Mizpah, and drew water, and poured it out before Jehovah, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against Jehovah. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpah. 7 And when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard it, they were afraid of the Philistines. 8 And the children of Israel said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto Jehovah our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines. 9 And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a whole burnt-offering unto Jehovah: and Samuel cried unto Jehovah for Israel; and Jehovah answered him. 10 And as Samuel was offering up the burnt-offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel; but Jehovah thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten down before Israel. 11 And the men of Israel went out of Mizpah, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them, until they came under Beth-car.

12 Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpah and Shen, and called the name of it Eben-ezer, saying, Hitherto hath Jehovah helped us.

Additional Passage for Study: Luke 22 : 39-46.

The Time—1121 B.C.

The Place—Mizpah is a name given to many heights in Palestine, but the place of this story was a high hill in central Palestine, about four miles north of Jerusalem.

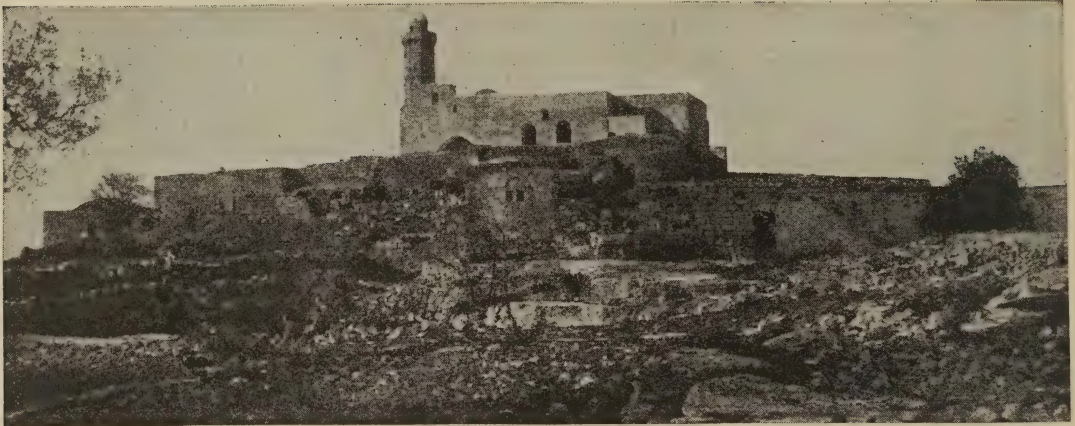
DAILY HOME READINGS

DATE	TITLE	REFERENCE
Monday, May 10.....	Victory Under Samuel.....	I Sam. 7: 2-17.
Tuesday, May 11.....	Jethro's Counsel Accepted.....	Ex. 18: 13-26.
Wednesday, May 12.....	Strong in the Lord.....	Josh. 1: 1-9.
Thursday, May 13.....	Selected for Service.....	Acts 6: 1-8.
Friday, May 14.....	A Servant of God.....	Acts 27: 20-25.
Saturday, May 15.....	The Weak Becoming Strong.....	Joel 3: 9-17.
Sunday, May 16.....	Triumph in Christ.....	II Cor. 2: 12-17.

GOD THE PROMISE-KEEPER

For more than twenty years the Philistines had been masters in Israel. Their garrisons were in every strong place, and they exacted as tribute from the people the best of their wheat and oil.

The Israelites, debased by idolatry and dejected by their slavery, had fallen into a condition of apathy. Shiloh, with its tabernacle, was probably in the hands of their oppressors. Israel was without a sanctuary as well as without a ruler. But though



By permission of Dr. George Robinson

MIZPAH, WHERE SAMUEL JUDGED ISRAEL AT THE TIME OF THIS LESSON

the people had forgotten God, God had not forgotten that they were his covenant people. The time had come when he was prepared to keep his promises to Abraham. The power of the oppressor was to be broken, and his people freed, not because they were worthy but because God had promised their fathers to help them. The facts of life prove ever that God is the great Promise-Keeper.

DELIVERANCE THROUGH A PERSON

When God was ready for the deliverance of his people from their oppressors, he proceeded to bring this deliverance about through a man who was ready for the task. For years Samuel had been getting ready. His mother had prayed for him and devoted him to God's service. He had worked faithfully at the humble tasks that fell to boys to do in the tabernacle, he had studied the holy books until he knew the whole story of how God had guided and led his people in the old days and what his will was for them, and then he had gradually won the confidence of the people by the things he had done in the years after Eli's death. Now he was ready to be God's deliverer. This is the way in which God always works. In this story that we are studying, we find the fact repeated again and again, that God's deliverances are wrought by men whom he has filled with his great ideas. Again and again when the people, through their idolatry, had sold themselves into bondage, God raised up a deliverer in the person of some great champion of the faith, who led them to victory and freedom. Men have always seen in these hero judges types of the great Deliverer from sin and death, Jesus Christ. Poor and imperfect types they are, but Samuel, the last of the line, is the noblest of them all. The cleanliness of his childhood, the integrity of his manhood,

the intensity of his consecration to his great work, mark him as among the greatest of Old Testament men, and fit him peculiarly to be a forerunner of the Christ, who came to be our Deliverer from our sins and our selfishness, into the liberty and freedom of the sons of God.

THE TRAINING FOR FUTURE TASKS

As we are thinking of the consummation of this great task of Samuel's, ought we not to realize that there are many tasks to be done in this sadly preparing world by the boys and girls who are to-day preparing for the work of their lives? The War broke down a great many old things. Some were good and many were bad. We must rebuild the good things and replace the bad things with better. But above all, we must replace the old ideals of selfishness, which finally brought on the War, with the great ideals of Christ. If we believe the lesson of history, that God does all his marvelous works through human instruments, can we not see that what the world needs is an army of Samuels, each prepared to do in his own home city the mighty tasks of God, to make the next age better than the past age has ever been? Where is God going to get these men except among the boys of to-day who are being trained in Christian homes and churches? What a challenge it is to the boy who reads these words! Will he be willing to undergo the discipline that Samuel underwent? To put God's things before his own things? To do the hard little tasks with little recompense and amid much difficulty until he has gained the experience that will fit him for greater tasks? All these things he must be ready to do, but if he does them he will have an opportunity to serve greatly in the mighty tasks of the coming days.

THE CONDITION OF DELIVERANCE

Deliverance was no light thing, and the conditions upon which it was to be obtained were not light conditions. These were sincere repentance for sin and whole-hearted return to the Lord. Samuel laid strong emphasis upon this work of repentance and reform. He did not content himself with worrying the Philistines into submission, as did Samson, by brilliant exploits and marvelous exhibitions of prowess, which had, after all, little effect on the people of Israel and their lives. He saw that the miseries they were undergoing were the chastisement of God for their sins, and he realized that the first step toward freedom must be repentance. So he set himself to work to rekindle in the hearts of Israel the almost dead fires of their faith. His demand was that they put away the strange gods. "Direct your hearts unto Jehovah," he said, "and serve him only; and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines." In response to his teaching the record is that "the children of Israel did put away the Baalim and the Ashtaroth, and served Jehovah only." And this reform was speedily followed by the evidence of God's blessing.

True freedom from the sins that master us is to be had no other way than this. We may perform all sorts of feats of strength, as did Samson, but the only way in which we can get rid of the Philistines that infest our hearts—lust, and uncleanness, and malice, and bitterness—is through repentance and turning unto God. The reason that many of us have such a hard time fighting the sins that so easily beset us is that we take Samson's way rather than God's way.

THE RENEWING OF THE COVENANT

God likes to be reminded of his promises, and he wants us to remember ours. So Samuel, when he saw the evidence of Israel's repentance, gathered the people together at Mizpah to renew their covenant vows. The sacrifices were the solemn recognition of their duty to Jehovah, and their claim of his covenant again. This covenant had been made originally with Abraham, and it had been renewed from time to time. Through it God had bound himself to help his people, as they bound themselves to serve him. The blood shed in the sacrifice was the seal of the covenant. Deliverance came to the people as they rested anew on the covenant. So deliverance comes to us as heirs of the new covenant in Christ's blood, wherein God binds himself and all his power to help and save all who believe in him through Christ.

Sometimes you hear men say that everything is against them. Life is hard for them, and filled with difficulties. But Paul did not find it so in the covenant of Christ. "If God is for us, who is against us?" was his challenge. He knew that God is the supreme Master of this world; that the powers of nature are under his control; that his hand guides in the history of nations; that even the

forces of evil, insolent though they be, dare not intervene where he forbids. A man's life when he trusts God fully is like the city that the young man saw when the prophet gave him vision, with the mountains round about filled with the troops of God. But silly sentimentalism must not blind us to the fact that these powers of God are only for those who fear and serve him. When Israel forgot, God withdrew, but when Israel repented, God guarded again. We should get this fact fixed very hard in our thinking. We are realizing perhaps more clearly than our fathers did that God is the Father of all men. But that does not mean that God is going to let men do as they please, and not care. No good father does that with his children; he demands their obedience and, when they refuse to give it, he disciplines them. God the Father of all men is the same God who was the Father of Israel, and who sent discipline to Israel, not that he wanted to see Israel suffer, but because he knew that only so would Israel obey and follow in his way.

THE ANSWER TO PRAYER

The renewal of the covenant was accompanied by a day of fasting and prayer. The people not only prayed themselves, but they begged Samuel to "cease not to cry unto Jehovah our God for us." While they went to fight he remained to pray.

As he stood before the altar, making his intercession, God interfered in the battle and Israel was delivered. It is quite a common thing for shallow-thinking men to deride the power of prayer. But the study of history shows God interfering time and again when his people call on him for help. Suppose you take the book of The Acts some quiet evening and read it through, and you will find that men were delivered from prison, from shipwreck, from the hands of their enemies as they prayed and others prayed for them. Truly "more things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of." And if we want prayer to be all that God meant it to be in our lives we ought to know what it will do and what it has done. By all means we ought to try it for ourselves, and not merely rest on the verdict of history. Make prayer one of the things on which you depend to get through the day, to get your work done. If a task isn't worth praying about, it isn't worth doing. God does not stand ready to answer every prayer as we want it to be answered, but we shall surely find that when we pray in humbleness and sincerity, he answers as seems best to him, and we find out later that it was best for us. God's heroes of the days to come will be those who know how to pray most earnestly.

TO PRAYER ADD THE APPOINTED MEANS

While the people were engaged in prayer they saw the Philistines advancing. While Samuel prayed they went to fight. While they used the means in their power, the power of God was with

them. As they were fighting, the Lord appeared in the storm, to aid them in their strife. To the noise of their battle shout he added the voice of his thunder, and to the flash of their weapons the blaze of his lightnings, till the foe, filled with the fear of fighting against God, turned to flee. This is the way God always works. We may not sit idle and wait for some marvelous interposition of God's power, nor may we first do our part in our own strength and then wait for God to do his. It is in and through our working that the power of God is put forth. Praying and fighting, fighting and praying, not doing either alone, but both at the same time—and we have the victory.

When the victory was won, Samuel took a stone, and in the sight of all Israel set it up as a memorial to God's help, calling it "Ebenezer," "Hitherto hath Jehovah helped us." While the victory was still fresh in mind, they remembered in a tangible way that not their might but God's had achieved it. The people of Israel had other battles to fight. They would win them just as they had won this battle, by doing their part, and trusting God for the rest. It is a safe plan for Christ's soldiers. When God gives us a victory, raise an Ebenezer. This is his due, and every time you think of it, it will give you fresh faith and strength. Form the habit early. Pride is a great sin against God and against ourselves. Nothing keeps pride out like gratitude to God for his goodness. When a man realizes that all he is and all he has done is of God, he is not likely to have room for pride. Ours is a boastful age. We pride ourselves on our independence. There is great need in our time of constantly remembering the fact that God can help and does help, and that the wisely planned life rests on him.

QUIETER DAYS

Verses 13-17, which are not printed with the text of the lesson, describe the conditions in Israel after this defeat. "The Philistines were subdued, and they came no more within the border of Israel: and the hand of Jehovah was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel." "It was no mere solitary victory, this success of Israel at Ebenezer, but was the sign of a new spirit in Israel. . . . The old idol worship of Canaan, which corrupted and degraded every nation which practiced it, was in a great measure swept away from among the chosen people, while the pure religion of the Eternal of Hosts was no longer conferred solely to . . . the tribe of Levi." What was the reason for this great change? The people of Israel were living righteously and obeying Jehovah, under the leadership of this wise man Samuel. We are so weary of war and so anxious for peace these days. Does this way in which Israel found peace mean anything to us? Is it still true that "Righteousness exalteth a nation"? And can righteousness be had in any other way than by the change first in the individual?

THE LESSON'S WORDS AND PHRASES

3. Ashtaroth. Images of gods worshiped by some of the nations round about.

4. Baalim. Images of Baal.

6. Drew water. An oblation, or sacrifice. Water was scarce and precious in that country, and to offer it in sacrifice to God was to offer a precious thing.

12. Took a stone. Still a favorite way of remembering an incident in the East. A man takes a stone and sets it up in a place where something remarkable has happened, as a memorial of that thing.

QUESTIONS FOR INTERMEDIATE CLASSES

1. What were the various things that entered into the shaping of Samuel's character? How much effect do you think his mother's prayers had on his life?

2. What method did God use to deliver Israel? Who is our Deliverer from sin and death, and how does he deliver us?

3. What were the things that the people of Israel had to do before God would deliver them?

4. What are the Philistines that infect our hearts? Can we get rid of them in any other way than that in which Israel followed?

5. Why did Samuel set up the stone which he called "Ebenezer"? From what great sin will the habit of thankfulness keep us?

The Intermediate Catechism

Q. 27. What is meant by the kingdom of God?

A. By the kingdom of God is meant the rule of God in the hearts of men, so that in love to him and to their fellow men, they live in righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

FOR SENIOR DISCUSSION

1. Samuel was in his person the representative of the ideal to Israel. Is it possible for men to understand ideas in any other way? Is the Christian religion to be spread by sermons or by lives?

2. Have the conditions of God's favor changed with the passing of the centuries?

3. How real and vital a part had prayer in this victory?

4. How much value has gratitude for the keeping of Americans in the right path?

The Shorter Catechism

Q. 76. Which is the ninth commandment?

A. The ninth commandment is, Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

Q. 77. What is required in the ninth commandment?

A. The ninth commandment requireth the maintaining and promoting of truth between man and man, and of our own and our neighbor's good name, especially in witness-bearing.

ISRAEL'S FIRST KING

The Golden Text—"Only fear Jehovah, and serve him in truth with all your heart."—I Sam. 12: 24.

TEXT OF LESSON, I SAM. 9: 15-21, 25 to 10: 1

For entire lesson, see I Sam. 9: 15 to 10: 24.

COMMON VERSION

9: 15 ¶ Now the LORD had told Sam'u-el in his ear a day before Saul came, saying,

16 To-morrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Ben'ja-min, and thou shalt anoint him *to be* captain over my people Is'ra-el, that he may save my people out of the hand of the Phi-lis'tines: for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me.

17 And when Sam'u-el saw Saul, the LORD said unto him, Behold the man whom I spake to thee of! this same shall reign over my people.

18 Then Saul drew near to Sam'u-el in the gate, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, where the seer's house *is*.

19 And Sam'u-el answered Saul, and said, I *am* the seer: go up before me unto the high place; for ye shall eat with me to-day, and to-morrow I will let thee go, and will tell thee all that *is* in thine heart.

20 And as for thine asses that were lost three days ago, set not thy mind on them; for they are found. And on whom *is* all the desire of Is'ra-el? *Is it* not on thee, and on all thy father's house?

21 And Saul answered and said, *Am* not I a Ben'ja-mite, of the smallest of the tribes of Is'ra-el? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Ben'ja-min? wherefore then speakest thou so to me?

* * * * *

25 ¶ And when they were come down from the high place into the city, *Sam'u-el* communed with Saul upon the top of the house.

26 And they arose early: and it came to pass about the spring of the day, that Sam'u-el called Saul to the top of the house, saying, Up, that I may send thee away. And Saul arose, and they went out both of them, he and Sam'u-el, abroad.

27 And as they were going down to the end of the city, Sam'u-el said to Saul, Bid the servant pass on before us, (and he passed on,) but stand thou still a while, that I may shew thee the word of God.

* * * * *

10: 1 Then Sam'u-el took a vial of oil, and poured *it* upon his head, and kissed him, and said, *Is it* not because the LORD hath anointed thee *to be* captain over his inheritance?

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9: 15 Now Jehovah had revealed unto Samuel a day before Saul came, saying, 16 To-morrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him to be prince over my people Israel; and he shall save my people out of the hand of the Philistines: for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me. 17 And when Samuel saw Saul, Jehovah said unto him, Behold, the man of whom I spake to thee! this same shall have authority over my people. 18 Then Saul drew near to Samuel in the gate, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, where the seer's house is. 19 And Samuel answered Saul, and said, I am the seer; go up before me unto the high place, for ye shall eat with me to-day: and in the morning I will let thee go, and will tell thee all that is in thy heart. 20 And as for thine asses that were lost three days ago, set not thy mind on them; for they are found. And for whom is all that is desirable in Israel? Is it not for thee, and for all thy father's house? 21 And Saul answered and said, Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest thou to me after this manner?

* * * * *

25 And when they were come down from the high place into the city, he communed with Saul upon the housetop. 26 And they arose early: and it came to pass about the spring of the day, that Samuel called to Saul on the housetop, saying, Up, that I may send thee away. And Saul arose, and they went out both of them, he and Samuel, abroad. 27 As they were going down at the end of the city, Samuel said to Saul, Bid the servant pass on before us, (and he passed on,) but stand thou still first, that I may cause thee to hear the word of God.

* * * * *

10: 1 Then Samuel took the vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not that Jehovah hath anointed thee to be prince over his inheritance?

The Time—1102 B.C.

The Place—Ramah.

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DAILY HOME READINGS

DATE	TITLE	REFERENCE
Monday, May 17.....	Israel's Demand for a King.....	I Sam. 8: 1-9.
Tuesday, May 18.....	A Message from God.....	I Sam. 8: 10-20.
Wednesday, May 19.....	Saul's Errand.....	I Sam. 9: 1-14.
Thursday, May 20.....	Israel's First King.....	I Sam 9: 15-21, 25 to 10: 1.
Friday, May 21.....	Saul Presented to Israel.....	I Sam. 10: 17-27.
Saturday, May 22.....	A Chosen Vessel.....	Acts 9: 10-19.
Sunday, May 23.....	To Every Man His Work.....	I Cor. 12: 18-31.

THE REVOLUTION IN ISRAEL

We are accustomed to think of revolutions as being always accompanied by bloodshed or by great popular excitement. The French Revolution was filled with deeds of horror. The whole nation was in a ferment, and blood flowed in every town of France. Our own Revolution had many bloody battles, and many gallant lives were lost in the struggle to change our government. This revolution in Israel's government was brought about without struggle or excitement. From the time of the Exodus onward the government of the people of Israel had been a pure democracy. At times of stress and need they had been ruled by judges, but they were a free people. Surrounded by petty monarchies that were more or less absolute, they had been spared the tyranny of kings. Under the wise and vigorous administration of Samuel they had been free from oppression from without, secure from disorder within, and had known general prosperity. It seems like a strange blindness that they should have desired anything else.

THE REASONS FOR SEEKING A KING

The demand for a king came from the elders of the tribes, who were the leaders of the people, and who spoke in their name. They saw that Samuel was growing old, that his sons were not of the same stuff as their father, and clearly not fitted to take up his work after he was gone. Had they remembered how Samuel himself had been raised up by God in the time of the nation's need they might not have made their mistake, but, like many other men, their sense of God's power was not so great as their sense of their enemy's power. All through the years God had raised up men to meet the emergencies when they occurred. The only times that Israel had suffered were when she had neglected God and disobeyed him. But these leaders apparently did not have the faith which enabled them to trust God in future emergencies. They wanted some visible leader who would rally the tribes around him in the national defense. Other nations had such leaders. Why should not they be as other nations? It is very hard to live in the world and not to be like the world. It is very hard, when others in the class win good marks through cheating, to keep from getting good marks in the same way. It is very hard when other men achieve business success through sharp practices to keep from using sharp practices oneself. It is very hard to be

good when one has to be "peculiar." But when the elders of Israel asked for a visible king they rejected the divine, invisible King who had guided them through the years. The real root of their error was essentially the same as in the making of the golden calf in the wilderness. In that case they had not been satisfied with the invisible God, who was nevertheless real. So in this case they were not satisfied with the invisible King, Jehovah, but must have a man in whose person the royal authority would be visible. At the bottom of the demand lay unbelief. The unbelieving heart cannot walk by faith. It wants sight. We have the same difficulty to face in doing day after day the things which we know are right, and trusting God to help us and to keep us from being beaten by the forces of evil that are in the world. This way of faith is God's way of making men ready for his will, and making them strong.

SAMUEL'S FINE SPIRIT

One of the very fine things in this story is the spirit that was shown by Samuel. It is not easy for men to see themselves thrust aside by those whom they have served, particularly when they know that they have served well. Naturally Samuel was hurt by Israel's course. One cannot help being struck by the beauty and purity of his character as he met this crisis. How many a man would have acted otherwise! "If they won't have me they can do without me," he might have said. "If they won't permit me to continue the work I have been doing, and which has proved good, I will have nothing more to do with them." That is what many a man does, when he is set aside to give place for another, who, others think, can do the work better. This is the natural prompting of the human heart, but the divine motive was dominant in Samuel, the motive which Jesus more fully revealed, to guide those who follow him, when he "emptied himself," and thought not of himself, that he might help men.

So Samuel prayed, and, carrying his hurts to God, he learned to see the matter more clearly from God's viewpoint and to make little of his own disappointment. He came from that place of prayer with a stronger desire to serve God's cause, and help his people. It is strange how personal disappointments shrivel when men take them to the place of prayer. And Samuel had come to know the power of prayer so fully that he believed that

he would be sinning against God in failing to pray for Israel. See I Sam. 12 : 23.

GOD CHOOSES THE KING

There is much to awaken reverent admiration for God in his answer to the spirit of discontent. He let the Israelites have their way, nor did he overrule the lot by sending them an inferior ruler. The experiment of unbelief was to have every natural advantage. So God reveals unto the prophet that soon he shall meet the king who is to be.

There is a beautiful phrase in the Authorized Version describing the way God makes this revelation—"the Lord had told Samuel in his ear." It is the way in which a friend prepares a friend. Before the new king came God told the friend who had lived closely and constantly beside him of the king's coming, so that he was not surprised. Are there not many things God reveals to his friends, to those who live close to him, that other men never hear?

"God's providence is a wonderful scheme; a web of many threads, woven with marvelous skill; a network composed of all kinds of materials, great and small, but so arranged that the very smallest of them is as essential as the very largest to the completeness of the fabric." So in this meeting of Samuel and Saul. Saul's father, Kish, was a farmer, whose asses had strayed from their pasture. Saul, accompanied by a servant, went to seek for them. He did not find them, but he did find a kingdom. And, what was of more value to the future of the nation, he had the opportunity of being instructed and influenced by the able leader who had prepared his way for him.

The king that was to be had many qualities that commended him to the people as their leader. He came of good family, for Kish was "a mighty man of valor." He had a fine presence, "a young man and a goodly: and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people." He was brave in battle, not afraid of difficulties, and in the beginning showed a pleasing spirit of humility. The respectful, humble way in

which he dealt with the old Samuel draws one to him at once. Had he only continued that way, instead of growing boastful and proud, he might never have come to his sorrowful end and the mountains of Gilboa might never have seen "the shield of the mighty . . . vilely cast away." He began so fairly. Even Samuel seems to have been taken captive by his personality. But power spoiled Saul as it has spoiled many another man. He ceased to be humble. There was, however, one very doubtful thing about him. He did not seem to know who and what Samuel was. It must have been that he was of a family so entirely engrossed in their worldly affairs that they had no connection or interest in the religious life of their nation, and

in the religious services of which Samuel was the head. So he must have been lacking—as was indeed later shown—in loyalty to Jehovah, the real King of Israel. In spite of his splendid qualities, this lack of loyalty caused his ruin. The highest success is impossible for the man who disregards God in his plan of life. He may have a fine personality, he may win some victories, just as Saul did. But God is the Author of life, and he has his way in it, however we may shut our eyes to the fact. And, sooner or later, comes the test, which the godless man cannot meet, and he fails. Even though he have fortune, or fame, or power, he is a failure. Saul had all these, and yet he failed. A wise

king who sat on the same throne, and who knew by experience of what he wrote, summed up the whole matter in his advice, "Remember also thy Creator in the days of thy youth." That advice may not lead to fortune, but it does lead to enduring success.

THE TALK ON THE HOUSETOP

When Samuel and Saul met, the prophet relieved Saul's mind about the asses for which he had been seeking. Then he invited him to the feast which usually followed the sacrifice. Samuel had hinted at the honor which was in store for his guest, and Saul had received the intimation with a humility which one wishes he might always have had. The hint is followed by the honors shown him at the



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A MODERN STREET IN RAMAH

feast. He was given the chief seat and the ruler's portion. The prophet did not grudge Saul his new dignity, but was the first and most anxious to accord it to him. Samuel's character was like a cut jewel; every side of it gleamed with light.

When the feast was finished, Samuel took Saul to his own house in the city, and there, on the housetop, they spent hours together. It was a choice opportunity, had Saul but known. No hour is so rare in a young man's life as that in which an older man, who has traveled the way and fought the fight, talks to him, and with good counsel tries to fit him for his quest. We are not told of what passed between Samuel and Saul, but there can be little doubt as to what it was. Samuel must have shared with Saul the gathered wisdom of a lifetime. Perhaps he recalled to the young man, the new shepherd of the people, the purpose God had for Israel—how he had called Abraham, their father, and covenanted with him for himself and for his sons; how he had delivered them from Pharaoh's power, and fed them in their wandering years; how cities had fallen before them when Joshua led, and nations had been subdued when the judges, raised by his mercy, had marshaled them for battle. And then, with this as a background, he pointed the lessons for the future. Saul was to be the king, and armies would be at his command. But the king must not trust in himself, or in his armies, but in Jehovah, who was not only God, but Guard, for Israel.

So there, together, under the quiet of the stars, must the sage have counseled the king that was to be. It was a labor of love, but a glance at Saul's life reveals that it was labor lost. Saul was not the sort of man to profit from such words. His heart was like thorny ground. And how shall the seeds of truth bring forth fruit in such soil? The things of the world had been more to him than the things of God, and he could not understand what the prophet told. Among the thorns that choke out the truth according to Jesus' parable are just the things that dominated Saul, "the care of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches."

Many a boy who begins his life right makes a failure of it because of these choking thorns of which Jesus spoke. "The care of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches" are far more dangerous enemies of our souls than open vice. Hannibal led his soldiers long ago against Rome. They won every pitched battle in a long campaign. Then they decided to winter in Capua. But the physical pleasures they found there sapped their strength so much that when the spring came they were unfit for battle, and were driven back in ignominious defeat. The "little things" had accomplished what the armies of Rome could not do.

Fretfulness over cares, the desire to be rich which becomes avarice, the pleasures of life, are dangerous thorns in the soil of our lives. They will choke out the wheat, and make us unfruitful and useless.

THE ANOINTING IN THE MORNING

The story we study ends with the old leader's sending the new leader away after anointing him to be king over Israel. Very beautiful is the way it was done. Very early in the morning, while the little city still slept—for he would not have a throng to gaze at the solemn scene, since it was not time for the throng to know—he called Saul as he slept out under the stars on the housetop, and started him on his journey. And as was the custom with a guest, Samuel went part of the way with Saul. Then he paused and bade Saul's servant go on ahead, and when they were alone he poured the holy oil over Saul's head and told him finally that God had chosen him to be the king. So Saul went away.

The time of kings is past. We want no more of them. But we are all summoned in a peculiar fashion to be the leaders of God's people in the world. And early in the morning of our lives God comes to us to pour the oil of his love upon us and set us aside for the service. Will we go to any better purpose than did Saul?

THE LESSON'S WORDS AND PHRASES

9:18. **Seer's.** This is a word used here in practically the same sense as the word "prophet." It does not mean a worker of magic.

20. **All that is desirable in Israel.** Its hope and ambition for a worthy leader.

25. **The high place.** The place where the altar was erected and the worship held. **Communed.** Held a private conference.

10:1. **Kissed him.** In token of loyalty.

QUESTIONS FOR INTERMEDIATE CLASSES

1. What were the reasons that made Israel want a king? How much did lack of faith enter into this desire?

2. How did Samuel "play the game"?

3. What were the strong points in Saul's character? What were the weak spots that caused his failure? Do these things still cause men to fail?

4. What great opportunity did Saul have in the hours spent with Samuel on the housetop? Is a boy a fool or is he wise who seeks to learn from older men?

The Intermediate Catechism

Q. 28. What is our sure hope concerning the kingdom of God?

A. Our sure hope concerning the kingdom of God is that it will increase until it is fully come in all the earth.

Q. 29. What is our Lord's last command concerning the kingdom of God?

A. Our Lord's last command concerning the kingdom of God is: "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the

name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."—Matt. 28 : 19, 20.

TOPICS FOR SENIOR DISCUSSION

1. Is the advice given in the Golden Text good advice for America in the present crisis in world affairs? Why?
2. How do you suppose Samuel was able to meet this crisis in his own affairs in such calm fashion?
3. Take the character of Saul. Apply the rea-

sons of his failure to modern life. Do they still hold?

4. God guided Saul to Samuel in a rather casual way, for a great purpose. Can you give any instances of his doing the same thing in the history of our country?

The Shorter Catechism

Q. 78. What is forbidden in the ninth commandment?

A. The ninth commandment forbiddeth whatsoever is prejudicial to truth, or injurious to our own or our neighbor's good name.

Lesson IX—JONATHAN AND HIS ARMOR-BEARER

The Golden Text—"Be strong and of good courage."—Josh. 1 : 6.

TEXT OF LESSON, I SAM. 14: 1-13

For entire lesson, see I Sam. 14: 1-46.

COMMON VERSION

1 Now it came to pass upon a day, that Jon'athan the son of Saul said unto the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over to the Phi-lis'tines' garrison, that *is* on the other side. But he told not his father.

2 And Saul tarried in the uttermost part of Gib'e-ah under a pomegranate tree which *is* in Mig'ron: and the people that *were* with him *were* about six hundred men;

3 And A-hi'ah, the son of A-hi'tub, Ich'a-bod's brother, the son of Phin'e-has, the son of E'li, the LORD's priest in Shi'loh, wearing an ephod. 'And the people knew not that Jon'a-than was gone.

4 ¶ And between the passages, by which Jon'a-than sought to go over unto the Phi-lis'tines' garrison, *there was* a sharp rock on the one side, and a sharp rock on the other side: and the name of the one *was* Bo'zez, and the name of the other Se'neh.

5 The forefront of the one *was* situate northward over against Mich'mash, and the other southward over against Gib'e-ah.

6 And Jon'a-than said to the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the LORD will work for us: for *there is* no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few.

7 And his armourbearer said unto him, Do all that *is* in thine heart: turn thee; behold, I *am* with thee according to thy heart.

8 Then said Jon'a-than, Behold, we will pass over unto *these* men, and we will discover ourselves unto them.

9 If they say thus unto us, Tarry until we come

AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE¹

1 Now it fell upon a day, that Jonathan the son of Saul said unto the young man that bare his armor, Come and let us go over to the Philistines' garrison, that is on yonder side. But he told not his father. 2 And Saul abode in the uttermost part of Gibeah under the pomegranate-tree which is in Migron: and the people that were with him were about six hundred men; 3 and Ahijah, the son of Ahitub, Ichabod's brother, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eli, the priest of Jehovah in Shiloh, wearing an ephod. And the people knew not that Jonathan was gone. 4 And between the passes, by which Jonathan sought to go over unto the Philistines' garrison, there was a rocky crag on the one side, and a rocky crag on the other side: and the name of the one was Bozez, and the name of the other Seneh. 5 The one crag rose up on the north in front of Michmash, and the other on the south in front of Geba.

6 And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armor, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that Jehovah will work for us; for there is no restraint to Jehovah to save by many or by few. 7 And his armorbearer said unto him, Do all that is in thy heart: turn thee, behold, I am with thee according to thy heart. 8 Then said Jonathan, Behold, we will pass over unto the men, and we will disclose ourselves unto them. 9 If they say thus unto us, Tarry until we come to you; then we will stand still

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to you; then we will stand still in our place, and will not go up unto them.

10 But if they say thus, Come up unto us; then we will go up: for the LORD hath delivered them into our hand: and this shall be a sign unto us.

11 And both of them discovered themselves unto the garrison of the Philistines: and the Philistines said, Behold, the He'brews come forth out of the holes where they had hid themselves.

12 And the men of the garrison answered Jon'athan and his armourbearer, and said, Come up to us, and we will shew you a thing. And Jon'athan said unto his armourbearer, Come up after me: for the LORD hath delivered them into the hand of Is'ra-el.

13 And Jon'a-than climbed up upon his hands and upon his feet, and his armourbearer after him: and they fell before Jon'a-than; and his armourbearer slew after him.

The Time—1085 B.C.

The Place—The position of the two armies was in a valley, now called the Wady es-Suweinet, running from east to west across the central plateau of Palestine—the plateau where General Allenby at the head of the Allied army won his great, final victory which destroyed the Turkish armies—a few miles north of Jerusalem.

DAILY HOME READINGS

DATE	TITLE	REFERENCE
Monday, May 24.....	Enemies of Israel.....	I Sam. 13 : 1-7.
Tuesday, May 25.....	Jonathan and His Armor-Bearer.....	I Sam. 14 : 1-13.
Wednesday, May 26.....	Israel Delivered.....	I Sam. 14 : 15-23.
Thursday, May 27.....	Saul Victorious.....	I Sam. 14 : 47-52.
Friday, May 28.....	God Our Defense.....	Psalm 62.
Saturday, May 29.....	Rejoicing in Trials.....	I Peter 4 : 1-14.
Sunday, May 30.....	Overcoming.....	I John 2 : 13-20.

AS THINGS WERE IN ISRAEL

The events of this lesson occurred seventeen years after the events recorded in the last lesson. The seventeen years had brought big changes to Israel. Then the people were filled with hope, enthusiastic in victory, ready to attempt anything to which their leader called them. At the time of this lesson he and they were sitting in helplessness while the Philistines ravaged their land. The difference was largely due to Saul himself. He had fallen far away from the position he had assumed at Gilgal. Then he ascribed the victory to Jehovah, and for a fleeting time trusted in Jehovah's power. But this faith had long since vanished. At this time he observed the forms of religion, like a man who continues to repeat an evening prayer learned in childhood, though its spiritual meaning has been long forgotten. He had a priest with him, and he still offered sacrifices, but the voice of Samuel was no longer heard in his councils, and the great idea that Samuel had taught him, that God was the real, though invisible Leader of Israel, who could save it in every difficulty, had long been forgotten.

The religious condition of the king was reflected in the people. This spiritual decay was accompanied by temporal misery. The Philistines had

invaded the land in overwhelming numbers. They had carried off the people as slaves, and to prevent an uprising had destroyed or confiscated their arms. Perhaps the statement that only Saul and Jonathan had either sword or spear is an Oriental way of stating that they were the only two in Israel who were thoroughly equipped. In any event, the people were poorly armed, and very despondent over their condition. Fearful and afraid to attack, they were simply trying to hold what they had left. It is the same condition which we have seen many times in the lessons of this quarter. Israel served Jehovah, and Israel prospered. Israel wandered away from the path that Jehovah had set for her to follow, and Israel suffered. But, some one will say, that is not the way God deals with people nowadays. Many a man is prosperous and wicked. Many another man is poor and yet he serves God truly. May not the answer be that Israel was still in the childhood of its faith and that God treated it as children are treated, rewarding it when it was good, rebuking it when it did wrong? But we have grown up. We know more than they did, because we know that the end of life is not many possessions or even happiness; its real end is to glorify God. And a man may glorify and serve him when he is poor as much as when he is rich. So we must not

make the mistake of applying these old tests of prosperity and poverty to modern men, to see whether they are blessed by God or not. His blessings now take other forms, and are not measured with dollars.

SAUL'S LACK OF FAITH

The outstanding point in the lesson is the contrast between the two leading figures. Though they were father and son, they were separated by worlds of difference, not in outward appearance, but in the deeper sphere of character. Saul lacked faith, and Saul did nothing; Jonathan had faith, and Jonathan greatly dared. That, in a word, was the difference.

It is a sorry Saul whom we see, sitting idle and despondent under the pomegranate tree, with his wretched host about him, while his enemies hold the strong places of his kingdom, and harry him just as they please. It seems almost impossible to think of him as the same Saul who fought at Jabesh-gilead, with the Spirit of the Lord upon him. Then he had relied on the Lord for help, and the Lord had helped him. Now the formalist had forgotten the lessons Samuel had tried to teach him, and had forgotten God. Through the years he had come to rely solely on himself, and now, with his power broken and his host unarmed, he was afraid, and sat hopeless and helpless under the pomegranate tree.

We must not be too hasty in judging Saul. Many a man has done the same thing for the same reason. Only the man who has come to believe that God is very much alive in his world is going to fight on after he is beaten. There is no prayer that we should begin to pray early in life and continue to offer every day, more fervently then that of the disciples, "Increase our faith." As a man's faith increases the difficulties that were as big as mountains become like molehills. A little boy stands looking at a wall. It towers high above his head. But his father picks him up and places him on his shoulder. From this height the wall looks small. Faith is coming to look at difficulties from the shoulders of our Father, God. Do we not remember the lesson in the last quarter which told of the gift of the Holy Spirit? The Spirit was given simply that the ordinary man might know that God is near him, to lift him up on the wall, if you want to put it that way, certainly to help him in all the tasks of his life, whether they be big or little. The boy who learns this and remembers it has learned the biggest fact of life.

JONATHAN'S FEAT OF FAITH

The king's son was different from the king's self. Jonathan was preëminent in the very quality Saul lacked. The things that the father ever failed to see were plain and apparent to the son. He had learned the lesson that the past ever has for the open-minded man. He knew what God had done for his people through men who were insignificant in themselves, and from this he drew his conclusions

as to what God could do. Had he not filled Shamgar with might, so that, armed simply with an ox-goad, he had slain six hundred Philistines? Was not he behind Samson in every marvelous exploit? The one clear thing that Jonathan saw in all of Israel's history was that there was "no restraint to Jehovah to save by many or by few." It was this that filled him with daring. To the careless thinker Jonathan's exploit may seem foolhardy, but in reality it was the splendid heroism of the man whom God makes greatly daring.

The project Jonathan had in mind was to make an attack on the camp of the Philistines, attended only by his armor-bearer. One of their outposts garrisoned the top of a high rock. The physical effort to scale this was most difficult and perilous, and they might easily have been destroyed by a stone hurled from above. And with the top reached, what were two against an army? The enterprise was desperate, but it was possible if God were with them. So they began the ascent, fell on the unprepared foe, and won an impossible victory, not through swords merely but by faith.

Jonathan displayed qualities that day which entitled his name to a place on the noble roll of Bible heroes. He believed that God could use him as an instrument, if God would, and if God did, he would be utterly safe, whether on the cliff's hazardous face, or against the garrison's tremendous odds. Such faith is back of the story of modern missions. David Livingstone goes into the heart of a black and hostile continent, filled with unknown disease and unknown enemies. Like Jonathan he hews a way for a greater army to follow. Lions, poisoned arrows, fever-haunted marshes, the malice of the slave trader, nothing could touch him until he had won his victory. The same thing was repeated in Carey's life, in Judson's, in Paton's, in a host too large to name, yet too glorious to forget. There is no reason why all men cannot have the same faith. There are difficulties which face us in ordinary life which are just as real as were those Philistines on the rock. How shall I get that education which seems impossible? How shall I pay honorably that debt which the long sickness brought? How shall I win this business struggle without compromising my honor? In the same way that Jonathan did, by going forward with the might of God. The words of Jesus tell us that there is nothing that we cannot do by faith. He will do most with his life who earliest learns the lesson of faith and uses it.

THE HELP OF A BRAVE COMPANION

Jonathan had another great help—the cheer that came from the presence of a brave and loyal companion. When Jonathan made the proposal to attempt the perilous feat he received the answer that ought to be written in letters of gold in every room where men gather to attempt things for God or for man—"Do all that is in thy heart: turn thee, behold, I am with thee according to thy heart."

The armor-bearer had that rarest and most wonderful of the graces—he knew how to be loyal. It was enough for him that his friend had it in his heart. He was with him, without question or quibble, climbing as he climbed, fighting as he fought, ready to die if need be, rather than forsake his friend. Of all the qualities our time sorely needs, not the least is loyalty—loyalty that does not question, loyalty that does not argue, loyalty that dares that thing which is in the heart of the leader.

FAITH AND LOYALTY

Faith and loyalty are the keys that open barred doors, the ladders by which we scale impossible heights. The Bible is full of stories of the things that were done by men who believed and who were loyal. Moses was taken away before Israel was settled in the land which she had been promised, but Joshua, who had been his loyal lieutenant, stepped in and completed the work of establishing the nations. He had to meet many difficulties, to defeat great armies, to take many fenced cities, but he succeeded because he believed and because he was true. And Peter's life gives us the story of the difference in the same man between loyalty and disloyalty. When Peter in the years before the crucifixion thought only of himself, he was constantly getting into trouble. But when he got to the point where he thought only of being loyal to his Master, Jesus Christ, he began to accomplish things, and he became the great leader of that apostolic company which spread the news of Christ over all that Eastern world.

What could we have done without loyalty and faith in the days of the Great War? We can no more do without them in Christ's great war, the end of which is to overthrow evil and establish righteousness on the earth. Will we be his armor-bearers who will follow wherever he leads?

THE LESSON'S WORDS AND PHRASES

1. **The young man that bare his armor.** His personal attendant, who bore his shield and weapons when he was not fighting.

4. **A rocky crag.** Rising like a steep cliff.

6. **These uncircumcised.** A term of contempt applied to all Gentiles.

13. **Upon his hands.** Hand over hand up the steep cliff's face.

QUESTIONS FOR INTERMEDIATE CLASSES

1. Why had Saul and his kingdom gotten into such difficulties? What was behind Saul's loss of faith? If a man's religion is merely of the formal kind will it be of much use to him when difficulties confront him?

2. What quality did Jonathan have that his father never possessed? How did this help in his achievement of the victory? Can we win against evil and temptation in the same way?

3. How much did the loyalty of the armor-bearer help Jonathan in his victory? How much depended on his loyalty? How much depends on ours?

The Intermediate Catechism

Q. 30. What are the special hindrances to our Christian life?

A. The special hindrances to our Christian life are temptations to sin which beset us from within and from without and against which we should always watch and pray.

FOR SENIOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. How much does a vital belief in a present God affect a man's success or failure in the ordinary affairs of life? How much did the lack of such a belief affect Saul?

2. Take the character of Jonathan, about whom we unfortunately know so little. What was there about him to win the loyal support of this armor-bearer? Is loyalty not a two-sided matter? Does not the one to whom men are supposed to be loyal have to have the qualities that call out loyalty?

3. Jonathan took great and almost impossible risks. Are we supposed to take great risks in the fight against evil and temptation?

The Shorter Catechism

Q. 79. Which is the tenth commandment?

A. The tenth commandment is, Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's.

SAUL'S FAILURE

The Golden Text—"Thou hast rejected the word of Jehovah, and Jehovah hath rejected thee."—
I Sam. 15: 26.

TEXT OF LESSON, I SAM. 15: 13-26

For entire lesson, see I Sam., ch. 15.

COMMON VERSION

13 And Sam'u-el came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed *be* thou of the LORD: I have performed the commandment of the LORD.

14 And Sam'u-el said, What *meaneth* then this

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13 And Samuel came to Saul; and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of Jehovah: I have performed the commandment of Jehovah. 14 And Samuel said, What *meaneth* then this bleating of the sheep in

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bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?

15 And Saul said, They have brought them from the Am'a-lek-ites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed.

16 Then Sam'u-el said unto Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what the LORD hath said to me this night. And he said unto him, Say on.

17 And Sam'u-el said, When thou *wast* little in thine own sight, *wast* thou not *made* the head of the tribes of Is'ra-el, and the LORD anointed thee king over Is'ra-el?

18 And the LORD sent thee on a journey, and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners the Am'a-lek-ites, and fight against them until they be consumed.

19 Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the LORD, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the LORD?

20 And Saul said unto Sam'u-el, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me, and have brought A'gag the king of Am'a-lek, and have utterly destroyed the Am'a-lek-ites.

21 But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gil'gal.

22 And Sam'u-el said, Hath the LORD, as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king.

24 ¶ And Saul said unto Sam'u-el, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice.

25 Now therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD.

26 And Sam'u-el said unto Saul, I will not return with thee: for thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD hath rejected thee from being king over Is'ra-el.

mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear? 15 And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto Jehovah thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed. 16 Then Samuel said unto Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what Jehovah hath said to me this night. And he said unto him, Say on.

17 And Samuel said, Though thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel? And Jehovah anointed thee king over Israel; 18 and Jehovah sent thee on a journey, and said, Go, and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed. 19 Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of Jehovah, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah? 20 And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of Jehovah, and have gone the way which Jehovah sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. 21 But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the devoted things, to sacrifice unto Jehovah thy God in Gilgal. 22 And Samuel said, Hath Jehovah as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of Jehovah? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. 23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as idolatry and teraphim. Because thou hast rejected the word of Jehovah, he hath also rejected thee from being king.

24 And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned; for I have transgressed the commandment of Jehovah, and thy words, because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice. 25 Now therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship Jehovah. 26 And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee; for thou hast rejected the word of Jehovah, and Jehovah hath rejected thee from being king over Israel.

The Time—About 1079 B.C.

The Place—Gilgal; in the Jordan Valley.

DAILY HOME READINGS

DATE	TITLE	REFERENCE
Monday, May 31.....	God's Command to Saul.....	I Sam. 15 : 1-12.
Tuesday, June 1.....	Saul's Failure	I Sam. 15 : 13-26.
Wednesday, June 2.....	Saul's Rejection Foretold.....	I Sam. 15 : 27-35.
Thursday, June 3.....	Danger of Disobedience.....	Heb. 6 : 1-12.
Friday, June 4.....	Fruits of Evildoing.....	Jude 1-11.
Saturday, June 5.....	Call to Repentance.....	Rev. 2 : 1-7.
Sunday, June 6.....	Fruits of Obedience.....	Rev. 22 : 7-14.

AFTER THE PHILISTINE DEFEAT

The reign of Saul was wholly occupied with wars. The heroic deed of Jonathan and his armor-bearer, of which we read last week, had opened the way to a crushing defeat of the Philistines at Michmash. Following this defeat, the Philistines had returned to their own country, and Israel was free from their oppression. Saul immediately turned his attention to such measures as would insure the safety and order of his kingdom. He began to gather an army and with this, he laid the foundation of that military power which enabled Israel to hold her own, and in later days under David to extend her conquests far beyond her own borders.

The position of Saul was a position of considerable difficulty. The Philistines were defeated, but many other enemies remained. The Moabites and the Ammonites on the east, the Edomites on the south, and the kings of Zobah on the north, waged one war after another against him. Saul seems to have taken new courage after the Philistine defeat, and the record of these struggles is a record of victory for the armies of Israel. Then occurred the event with which the lesson is concerned, when the tide turned finally against Saul and the doom of his house was written. It is another proof of the fact that a nation is not made secure by military strength alone, but that morals are of more importance than might in preserving a people.

AN ANCIENT ENEMY

The Amalekites occupied the country south of Palestine, roaming through the Wilderness of Sinai and pasturing their flocks and herds in the little green oases of the peninsula. We read of them first in Exodus, when they tried to prevent Israel's entrance into this country after the flight from Egypt. The armies under Moses defeated them with great slaughter and after the battle Moses erected an altar to commemorate the victory and called its name "Jehovah-nissi," "Jehovah is my banner." Then Moses added the word of which the lesson reminds us, "Jehovah hath sworn: Jehovah will have war with Amalek from generation to generation." It seems strange to us in this time to read of such vengeance. In fact we cannot understand why God permitted the long series of bloody wars with the tribes that peopled and surrounded Palestine, unless we remember that they were people given to very terrible practices, and that it was of the utmost importance that the people Israel be kept free from following in their ways and doing the things that they did, in order that they might develop along the lines which God wanted them to follow. It was a fierce, rough time, and many things were permitted which we are not expected to imitate.

SAUL'S SECOND CHANCE

While Saul was carrying on his struggle with the Philistines, the Amalekites, under the leader-

ship of their king, Agag, made frequent raids on the southern provinces of Israel. Immediately after Saul had consolidated his power, he was directed by Samuel to attack Amalek and utterly destroy all their possessions. It was Saul's second chance. Once before he had failed to do the thing which the Lord had bidden him do by the mouth of Samuel, and he had been punished by the exclusion of his sons from the throne. Now he was given another opportunity. Would he show that he had learned anything? Samuel came to him and told him plainly what was expected of him. The prophet reminded Saul that he was merely the servant of God, chosen by him to be the king of his people, and that his first duty was to God. Then followed the terrible command, the decree, which like an order of the court directing the execution of a murderer, pronounced the doom of Amalek. "Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass." It was an awful sentence, and our hearts revolt against it. But it was a doom that the circumstances demanded, just like the terms which the Allies imposed on Germany. Saul had nothing to do but obey. It was the chance to prove that he had learned to obey God, rather than his own will.

But the narrative discloses that he had not learned. After he had defeated Amalek and had come into the possession of the rich spoil, he chose the fat cattle rather than to obey, and so he missed his chance.

AN IMPORTANT DECISION

The question that every boy ought to settle in the very beginning of his life is exactly the question which Saul met that day: "Shall I obey absolutely the will of God, or shall I accept this opportunity to get hold of rich possessions?" The chance to get rich comes in so many ways. How eager Jesus was to guide us when we face that choice! Time after time he taught us that the only safe way is to follow God's law and God's plan. "What doth it profit a man," he declared, "to gain the whole world, and forfeit his life?" Time after time he urged us to think less of treasures upon earth and more of the unsearchable riches of God. Always he was trying to get us to see things in their true value, that it was far better to have peace in our souls and the quiet conscience that follows duty well done than all the treasures that earth offered. Yet how easy it is to do just the thing that Saul did, when the prize is within our grasp. Poor Saul, he missed his chance that day when he chose the flocks and herds, and he brought on himself and on his people a train of troubles which lasted for years.

HALF TRUTHS

When Samuel had heard of Saul's victory he went out to meet the king. Saul met him with the usual salutation, "Blessed be thou of Jehovah."

Then he added, "I have performed the commandment of Jehovah." This was only half true. He had obeyed just as far as he had wanted to obey, but he knew when he met Samuel that he had failed to carry out the command as it had been given him. So he uttered what is perhaps the worst form of a lie, that is, a half truth.

THE EXCUSES OF A COWARD

Even while Saul was assuring Samuel that he had done all that was expected of him, the wind brought to them as they stood together the sound of bleating sheep and lowing cattle. With bitter irony the prophet turned upon Saul. "If what you say be true, what means this bleating that I hear?" Saul could not escape the dilemma in which his deceit had placed him. He has to admit that he had not done what he was bidden to do, that he had not destroyed the animals devoted to destruction, but preserved them as spoil for his army. But he sought an excuse for this, and threw the blame on the people. They wanted the spoil, he said, and like an indulgent leader he had allowed them to keep it as their reward. Saul was not the sort of man to yield to the people, if he had wanted to destroy the spoil. Samuel must have smiled to himself as he listened to the ridiculous, childish excuse. To throw the blame of his own disobedience on his subjects was an act unworthy of a king. And it was a lie, not merely a mean evasion. One sin brought forth another sin. First he disobeyed the commandment of God as Samuel had delivered it to him. Then he told a half truth, about the destruction of the spoil. Then followed this mean lie, in which he shifted the blame. I once saw a horse tangled in a maze of barbed wire. He was running over a prairie field, and ran into a strand, where they were building a fence. Instead of standing still, he ran frantically around, getting more badly tangled every minute, until, hopelessly mazed and wounded very sorely, he fell over. That is what happens often to a man when he starts on the first sin. That is what happened to Saul, who became hopelessly mazed in the toils.

THE PROPHET PRONOUNCES THE SENTENCE

Samuel listened no longer to the lying king. He had a sentence to deliver. All night long he had prayed to God that the sentence be withheld, but the way Saul had acted evidently proved to him that the verdict was entirely necessary. "Stay," he commanded, "and I will tell thee what Jehovah hath said to me this night." He began by reminding Saul of how God had raised him to the kingdom. This same God was the One who had charged him utterly to destroy the Amalekites. Why had he not obeyed the voice of God? Then Saul brought forward another excuse. He had saved these fat cattle to be sacrificed before that God. Samuel listened no longer, but burst out in final sentence.

It is a great moment. Samuel was only a prophet and Saul was a king at the head of a victorious army. Nevertheless he fearlessly told him the truth about his sin and reminded him of the doom that follows disobedience. As one reads the story one remembers how John the Baptist stood before Herod in like fearless fashion, how Ambrose of Milan denounced the mighty Caesar for his sin, how Chrysostom so preached about their evil practices that the people of the proud court of Byzantium trembled before him. Great is the truth of God, and he who has it to declare need not fear the might of kings, for God is greater than those who would oppose him. We talk about the courage that is required to do the thing that is right, and to speak the truth always. If we really knew how great God is, would we need to talk of courage?

OBEDIENCE BETTER THAN SACRIFICE

In answer to Saul's poor excuse that the herds had been saved for sacrifice, Samuel laid down a principle which the prophets afterwards repeated and which Jesus himself indorsed, Matt. 9 : 13, that sacrifice or any other sort of worship and service were by no means of the same importance in the sight of God that obedience was—"Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." This is a tremendously important thing, decidedly the most important thing in this lesson and if we can remember only one thing out of the lesson this ought to be that thing. Yet it is, probably, if we may judge from results, the hardest thing in the world to understand—that God means what he says, that obedience is to him better than anything else in the world. Let us try to see why it is so.

Saul thought that he could make God forget his disobedience if he brought to him a big sacrifice. Now what sort of God would God be if Saul's plan had worked? Suppose you have broken the rules at school. You want to evade the punishment, and you take the teacher a box of candy or a bunch of flowers. If the teacher takes the candy and smiles and forgets about the disobedience what do you think of her? Certainly you lose some of the respect you have, and school discipline breaks down for you. You know that school life absolutely depends on discipline, that the school would break up if discipline broke up. Does not the same thing apply in the bigger school of the world? Saul thought that God was a Teacher who could be bribed. If every man thought that, we would have a world filled with men doing just what they pleased to others, and what they pleased with the laws that make life safe, and then running to God with their bribes. Would you like to live in such a world? Would it be a safe and happy place? Only as men learn to obey can they please God, for only thus can he carry out his plans for life. And any worship that stops short of obedience will not please him.

THE REPENTANCE THAT CAME TOO LATE

When Saul heard the prophet's bitter words he grew very much afraid—afraid more for his throne and for his safety than for the fact that he had sinned. But it was too late. He had had his chance—and he had failed.

THE LESSON'S WORDS AND PHRASES

13. Blessed. Simply a respectful salutation. The man who lives in Palestine to-day greets another not with our "good morning" but with "peace be with you."

17. Little. Humble and unknown, alluding to Saul's station when he was chosen king.

18. Journey. The expedition against Amalek.

19. Fly. To fall upon the spoil and seize it as his possession.

22. Fat of rams. The fat played an important part in the burnt sacrifice.

23. Witchcraft. Dealers in witchcraft or magic had an important place among the heathen peoples.

25. Turn again. Or continue to give me your support and favor.

QUESTIONS FOR INTERMEDIATE CLASSES

1. What was the general situation in Israel after the victory described in last lesson?

2. Who were the Amalekites? Why did Saul undertake this campaign against them?

3. How did Saul begin this chain of sins which led to his ruin? What is there about half truths that makes them so dangerous?

4. How did Saul prove that he was a coward? The story proves that Saul was brave in battle. Which is worse, the physical coward or the man who is afraid to do the thing which is right?

5. How did the old man Samuel prove his bravery?

The Intermediate Catechism

Q. 31. What special helps has God appointed for us in our Christian life?

A. The special helps which God has appointed for us in our Christian life are the Bible, the sacraments, prayer, and fellowship in the Church.

Q. 32. How should we use the Bible?

A. We should use the Bible with reverence, read it daily, treasure it in our hearts, and obey it in our lives.

TOPICS FOR SENIOR DISCUSSION

1. The lesson presents an interesting opportunity for the comparison of the characters of Saul and Samuel. Wherein does Samuel shine? What was behind Saul's failure? How much did faith have to do with Samuel's boldness? How much did the lack of it account for Saul's lies and excuses?

2. What is the reason behind the prophet's assertion that obedience is better than sacrifice? Does God not expect us to make sacrifices for him, of our time and our means in his service? Which is the more important, the sacrifice or the spirit in which it is offered?

3. Why did God finally reject Saul as the king of Israel?

The Shorter Catechism

Q. 80. What is required in the tenth commandment?

A. The tenth commandment requireth full contentment with our own condition, with a right and charitable frame of spirit toward our neighbor, and all that is his.

Lesson XI—A SHEPHERD BOY CHOSEN KING

The Golden Text—"The Spirit of Jehovah came mightily upon David from that day forward."

—I Sam. 16 : 13.

TEXT OF LESSON, I SAM. 16: 4-13

For entire lesson, see I Sam. 16: 1-13

COMMON VERSION

4 And Sam'u-el did that which the LORD spake, and came to Beth'le-hem. And the elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, Comest thou peaceably?

5 And he said, Peaceably: I am come to sacrifice unto the LORD: sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice. And he sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice.

6 ¶ And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on E-li'ab, and said, Surely the LORD's anointed is before him.

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4 And Samuel did that which Jehovah spake, and came to Beth-lehem. And the elders of the city came to meet him trembling, and said, Comest thou peaceably? 5 And he said, Peaceably; I am come to sacrifice unto Jehovah: sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice. And he sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice.

6 And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely Jehovah's

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7 But the LORD said unto Sam'u-el, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him; for *the LORD seeth* not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.

8 Then Jes'se called A-bin'a-dab, and made him pass before Sam'u-el. And he said, Neither hath the LORD chosen this.

9 Then Jes'se made Sham'mah to pass by. And he said, Neither hath the LORD chosen this.

10 Again, Jes'se made seven of his sons to pass before Sam'u-el. And Sam'u-el said unto Jes'se, The LORD hath not chosen these.

11 And Sam'u-el said unto Jes'se, Are here all *thy* children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep. And Sam'u-el said unto Jes'se, Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither.

12 And he sent, and brought him in. Now he *was* ruddy, *and* withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the LORD said, Arise, anoint him: for this *is* he.

13 Then Sam'u-el took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon Da'vid from that day forward. So Sam'u-el rose up, and went to Ra'mah.

anointed is before him. 7 But Jehovah said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have rejected him: for *Jehovah seeth* not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but Jehovah looketh on the heart. 8 Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, Neither hath Jehovah chosen this. 9 Then Jesse made Shammah to pass by. And he said, Neither hath Jehovah chosen this. 10 And Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Jehovah hath not chosen these. 11 And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he is keeping the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him; for we will not sit down till he come hither. 12 And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look upon. And Jehovah said, Arise, anoint him; for this is he. 13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of Jehovah came mightily upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah.

The Time—1077 B.C.

The Place—Bethlehem, an old city of Judah, whose name means "the house of bread."

DAILY HOME READINGS

DATE	TITLE	REFERENCE
Monday, June 7.....	A Shepherd Boy Chosen King.....	I Sam. 16 : 1-13.
Tuesday, June 8.....	David in Saul's Court.....	I Sam. 16 : 14-23.
Wednesday, June 9.....	Serving God in Youth.....	Ecl. 11 : 7 to 12 : 7.
Thursday, June 10.....	Taught from Childhood.....	II Tim. 3 : 14-17.
Friday, June 11.....	All for Christ.....	Phil. 3 : 1-14.
Saturday, June 12.....	Kings and Priests Unto God.....	Rev. 1 : 1-8.
Sunday, June 13.....	The Great King.....	Psalm 2.

A NEW KING NEEDED

God had at last rejected Saul, and to Samuel was given the task of anointing a new king. No doubt the task lay heavy on the heart of Samuel. He could not help remembering the fair beginning of Saul's career, and the promise he had given of being a worthy king. Perhaps, also, Samuel feared what the selection of a new king might mean to the peace and safety of the nation. A change in rulers often means a civil war, and the nation was weak enough as it was, and little able to resist its foes. War within itself might sound its doom. These thoughts must have filled his mind as he prepared for his journey to Bethlehem, where God had told him that he would find the new king.

But Samuel had formed the habit of obedience. So, laying aside his fears and his regrets, he went to do the Lord's bidding in Bethlehem. The place was not far from Ramah, where he lived, and he must at least have known something of the family

of Jesse. Bethlehem was not a prominent city of Judah then or later when a greater David was born in it; yet it is good to remember "what a mighty influence for good upon the human race has gone forward from this little spot both for time and for eternity." It is situated about five miles south of Jerusalem. A hilly country surrounds it, and the fields, though rough and stony, produce good crops of grain. Olive groves, fig orchards, and vineyards are found in the valleys and the lower slopes, and the flocks were pastured in the higher and wilder tracts. Here David lived his shepherd days, and here the midnight watchers with flocks heard the angels' song. In this little city Samuel was to find the king.

NOT THE OUTWARD APPEARANCE

It does not seem that it was unusual for Samuel to visit some particular place to offer sacrifice. Although he was no longer the national head, a

peculiar obligation to preserve the worship of Jehovah rested on him. Apparently there were times when he came to administer rebukes for lax living. This may explain the fear of the elders. Fortunately Samuel was able to quiet their fears and assure them that he had come to perform a religious service. So he bade them sanctify themselves before the sacrifice. There was great value in the old laws about cleansing before a man might come into God's presence. We are so apt to rush carelessly into his presence, without thinking of the solemnity of the occasion, without preparing our hearts for meeting him. We are more careful when we go to spend an evening with our friends or prepare to welcome them to our homes. And God is greater than any of them!

After the time of the sacrifice, Samuel had a chance to see the sons of Jesse. First among them stood the soldierly figure of Eliab. Samuel jumped at once to the conclusion that it was Eliab whom God had chosen to be king in Saul's place. Saul had looked like a king on the day when the lot fell on him. But the Lord had not chosen Eliab, and the reason he had not was that "man looketh on the outward appearance, but Jehovah looketh on the heart." Not good looks but character count with him. How we need to learn this! "The world is full of idolatries, but I question if any idolatry has been more extensively practiced than the idolatry of the outward appearance." God's demand is that man be good, not that he look good; that his heart be right, humble, and filled with love, not that he make a show of keeping God's Law. One of Christ's most scornful parables, that of the Pharisee and the Publican, is meant to teach us this. And God always sees. We cannot deceive him.

THE UNEXPECTED KING

The other sons of Jesse were likewise passed by. Only one remained, and him they had not thought of sufficient importance to bring to the sacrifice. He was out in the fields watching the sheep, but at the prophet's command he was brought. He was only a boy, "ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look upon. And Jehovah said, Arise, anoint him; for this is he."

David's father and brothers must have been surprised to see Samuel pour holy oil upon David's head in token that he was chosen for some service of God. The prophet did not tell them that David was to be the king in the future years. The choice must have seemed strange even to Samuel. But God has strange ways of picking the men who are to work his great works. When he wished to save his covenant people and prepare them in Egypt for a great future, he found a prime minister for Egypt in a prison. When Jesus picked the company of men who were to be his closest friends, and the future founders of his Church, he found

them in fishing boats and other humble places. Out of a miner's cabin he brought Luther to lead the great task of reforming his Church. And out of a pioneer's shack he called Lincoln to preserve our nation and all its ideals of liberty and equality. He still does as strange things. The fact that we live in a humble place is not a proof that he will not use us for great service. A clean heart such as David had, a willingness to do what God would have us do, and our lives may be kingly and our service great.

Notice, however, that David had one thing which it ought to be our ambition to pass on to our children after us—a heritage of piety. His great-grandmother was Ruth, the pilgrim of faith, and his father Jesse had evidently preserved the family tradition of religion. Most of us plan our lives, or try to plan them, so that we can leave those who come after us more comfortable. We try

to make money. That is a good thing, providing we do not forget the far more important thing, the leaving of a heritage of character and godliness.

OTHER CHILDREN GOD MAY USE

While we are thinking of how God chose this boy for the great task he was afterwards to perform, we might think with profit of the boys and girls who are to do in the coming years the tasks of God on the proper doing of which the safety of our world depends. For, unless the new world which is to come out of these years of storm and stress be filled full of the teachings of Christ, we can well tremble for the future. How many of



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DAVID SUMMONED BEFORE SAMUEL

these boys and girls live just as David lived in obscure places? To-day is Children's Day. We are all asked to think of and give to the work of Sabbath-school missions for the very purpose of seeking out such boys and girls in such obscure places, in the mountains, or on the prairies, or wherever they are to be found, and gathering them in little schools, where they may be trained in God's Word, so that they can do God's task. Of course we are asked to give to many things, and we sometimes think that we are tired of giving. If our gifts will train future Davids, will they not be well spent?

WHAT SHALL DAVID DO?

Little is said of the years that followed the anointing of David. Long years were to pass before he ascended the throne. There were to be many experiences of hardship and difficulty and disappointment ere he stood at last in his kingdom and heard his people shout, "Long live the king!" These are good facts to keep in mind. Many a boy who reads these notes will find himself in very much the same situation as David. He wants to do great things with his life. He plans this thing and that which he feels sure will be worthy. But so many things stand in the way of their realization. He has not the money to get the education which is necessary. There are many things that have to be done by him and done now, things that apparently have no connection with what he wants to do—such as tending sheep. There seems no possibility of his ever accomplishing his purpose, as if these present tasks and the many difficulties were going to prevent his purpose finally and forever. What shall he do? Shall he give up his dreams and settle down to tend sheep? The things David did and the things he learned in doing them are worth remembering in such circumstances.

THE SCHOOL OF THE KING

David, with the holy oil upon his head, went back to his life as a shepherd—a strange school for a king! Out among the sheep, alone in cold and heat, in storm and sunshine, he learned to endure physical hardship. There he learned to be brave as he defended his flocks from the attacks of prowling beasts. There he learned to be tender, for there were feeble lambs to be carried, and torn fleeces to be bound up. There he had time to think, to learn how great God is, to behold the evidences of his care in nature. All these things are seen in David's later life, when he was warrior and king and sweet singer of lasting songs. The things he learned and the things he thought have helped men for centuries. The psalm he sang about surveying the heavens, the work of God's hand, has made thousands see the littleness of their lives against the background of the stars, and the greatness of God's hand to help, since that hand holds the worlds. The "Shepherd Psalm" is the last poem in the world's literature that we would

give up, for it has brought much comfort to tired, lost men. Blessed is the man or the boy whose work gives him time to think. David Livingstone could think as he wove, and the result was the opening of Africa to the gospel. David later translated his thoughts into deeds and psalms, but first he tended his sheep. God may be preparing us by keeping us at some hard, monotonous task. Strange are the schools where he trains his kings! The one thing against which the story of his dealings with his servants always warns us is the impatience that ripens into fretfulness or carelessness. Let us not be weary in well-doing. In due season, the school will end and the throne be ready.

MEN OF GOD'S SPIRIT

The secret of this growth in David is to be found not solely in himself. Verse 13 shows us the added reason, "The Spirit of Jehovah came mightily upon David from that day forward." God guided him and inspired him, boy though he was. God stands ready to do that for anyone who will let him. The boy will not need to become any less a boy. One does not have to give up anything to become truly a son of God, except things that are mean and low and contemptible. I am quite sure that the shepherd boy David was as happy as any boy that ever lived. God wants to help every one of us over our difficulties, in our battles, until we become what he wants us to be. That is why he sent the Holy Spirit to us. The Spirit is God's presence in life and when we let him lead us, he teaches us the great things David learned and fits us as he fitted him for the work he has for us to do.

THE LESSON'S WORDS AND PHRASES

5. Sanctified. He cleansed them after the ceremony prescribed in the Law for those who desired to offer sacrifice.

6. Jehovah's anointed. Eliab had never been anointed. The phrase means that Samuel thought that Eliab was the son of Jesse whom God would choose.

7. Rejected. Refused.

12. Ruddy. The description is that of a beautiful boy in distinction to his stalwart brothers.

13. Horn. The horns of animals were made into flasks to contain the anointing oil, as our fathers used to shape them for carrying gunpowder.

QUESTIONS FOR INTERMEDIATE CLASSES

1. Why did Israel need a new king?
2. How did Samuel's habit of obedience help him in the duty he had to perform?
3. Why did Samuel offer a sacrifice before proceeding to anoint the new king?
4. Why did God pass by Eliab and choose David?
5. Are we using the circumstances under which we have to live as "a school of a king"?

The Intermediate Catechism

Q. 33. What are the sacraments?

A. The sacraments are the two sacred observances which Christ gave to the Church, baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Q. 34. What is baptism?

A. Baptism is the sacred use of water, as appointed by Jesus Christ, to signify God's cleansing us of our sins, our consecration to God, and our membership in the Church.

SUBJECTS FOR SENIOR DISCUSSION

1. Why did Samuel find it necessary to proceed in this secret manner to anoint a new king?

2. Eliab was a man of martial fitness, David only an untrained boy. Does power of body or power of heart count most in God's Kingdom?

3. Do we need in preparation for our life work to undergo the same vigorous service that David underwent? What part has the Holy Spirit in the training of a man for his life work?

The Shorter Catechism

Q. 81. What is forbidden in the tenth commandment?

A. The tenth commandment forbiddeth all discontentment with our own estate, envying or grieving at the good of our neighbor, and all inordinate motions and affections to anything that is his.

Lesson XII—THE LORD OUR SHEPHERD

The Golden Text—"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."—Ps. 23 : 1.

TEXT OF LESSON, PSALM 23

COMMON VERSION

- 1 The Lord *is* my shepherd; I shall not want.
- 2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.
- 3 He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
- 4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou *art* with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.
- 5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.
- 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE¹

- 1 Jehovah is my shepherd; I shall not want.
- 2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside still waters.
- 3 He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
- 4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.
- 5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: Thou hast anointed my head with oil; My cup runneth over.
- 6 Surely goodness and lovingkindness shall follow me all the days of my life; And I shall dwell in the house of Jehovah for ever.

DAILY HOME READINGS

DATE	TITLE	REFERENCE
Monday, June 14.....	The Lord Our Shepherd.....	Psalm 23.
Tuesday, June 15.....	False Shepherds.....	Ezek. 34 : 1-10.
Wednesday, June 16.....	The True Shepherd.....	Ezek. 34 : 11-16, 23-26.
Thursday, June 17.....	The Good Shepherd.....	John 10 : 11-18.
Friday, June 18.....	Seeking the Lost.....	Luke 15 : 1-10.
Saturday, June 19.....	"He Careth for You".....	I Peter 5 : 1-11.
Sunday, June 20.....	The Ever-Living Shepherd.....	Heb. 13 : 12-25.

THE PSALM IN LIFE

There is perhaps no portion of the Bible—except The Lord's Prayer—which is so well known as this psalm. It is one of the world's most wonderful

lyrics, but our interest in it is deeper than a literary interest. The poet who sings it has had so varied an experience, and through that experience has learned to have so deep a faith in God, that he

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sings a song which appeals to men of all sorts. It is not the beauty of the poetry that attracts them, but the fact that the psalm contains that faith in God and his goodness which they want for themselves. David, the singer, had a strange life. He had known quiet days "in green pastures." He had had his times of strife and battle "in the presence of enemies." He had passed through great sorrows that were like the valley where death's shadows lay dark. But in all of these experiences he had had the help and the presence of God. God's rod and staff had guided him, and God's hand had provided for his needs. So David looked forward into the future unafraid. The performance of yesterday would be the promise for to-morrow.

This psalm has always been a song of those who believe. The fact that Christ liked to speak of himself as the Shepherd, and of us as his sheep, has given it a special attraction. Particularly when Christians are in trouble do they like to sing it. It has always been a hymn of the persecuted and the lonely. Augustine long ago called it "The Hymn of Martyrs." Men of Presbyterian blood hold it particularly dear, for in the days of the Covenanting martyrdoms the moors of Scotland often echoed with its strains as our fathers gathered in the solemn conventicles. Sorely harried sheep they were, but they trusted the Shepherd.

THE SINGER HIMSELF

We all know who wrote this psalm. The boy David who kept his father's flocks in the hill pastures of Bethlehem, grown to be king, and gray and worn with the wars of the years, was the singer. And we know about whom he was writing—God, his Shepherd, who had kept him safe.

We cannot grasp to the full the meaning of the verses unless we realize how different was the life of a Bethlehem shepherd from that of the boy who keeps the sheep on the farm in America. It was a wild, rough country in which David dwelt, and prowling robbers or wild beasts constantly menaced the safety of his flock. He must constantly be on guard against their attack. The land was a land of little water, and he must know where the springs lay, where the scarce green pastures were, and the shady places where the flock might rest at noon. The constant presence of danger, the vast loneliness of the desolate hills, the hardships he shared with his flock, and the care and wisdom he must ever exercise on their behalf, created a bond between him and his sheep. He gave them care, they gave him love. This is the relationship of which he sings as existing between God and man. He had had long, silent hours in which to think his long thoughts. "Silence, solitude, the sheep noiselessly moving about him, the eagle sailing in slow circles about his head, the dawn struggling with the night on the far-away hills, the dewdrops sparkling on the grass, the loud stream rushing through its rocky bed, the black shadows deepening in the narrow glen, the great stars sliding through the night,"

these are the things that surrounded David's shepherd days and entered into his thoughts of God. The God who was behind all this was great, and he was also good. David grew to know his care more fully as the years passed. He knew that all he had tried to do for his sheep God had fully done for him. The Lord was his Shepherd. This psalm is the song of a singer who had learned faith. It is worth our study, for we never learn to live aright until we learn to live by faith. The Apostle Paul reminds us of the simplest and safest receipt for right living when he says, "That life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God." John Ruskin tells us, "This is one of six psalms which well studied and well believed suffice for all personal guidance."

THE SHEPHERD AND THE SHEEP

It might be well to take the Bible and study some of the passages that speak of God as a shepherd of his people. Gen. 49 : 24; Ps. 78 : 52; 80 : 1; Micah 7 : 14; Isa. 63 : 11. The word "shepherd" is also used with reference to Jesus as God's Messiah. Isa. 40 : 11; Ezek. 34 : 11-16. It is a frequent term in the New Testament to describe Jesus, as in John, ch. 10; Heb. 13 : 20; I Peter 2 : 25; 5 : 4. The people of God are described as his "flock," or as the "sheep of his pasture." Ps. 74 : 1; 79 : 13; 95 : 7; 100 : 3; Jer. 23 : 1.

"The Lord is my shepherd." Everything that follows depends on this. God offers himself freely, all his power, his wisdom, his love, his faithfulness unto men, to every man. But it is only if they will be his sheep. The human shepherd can buy sheep, and compel them to be part of his flock. Not so God. It is at once the dignity and the danger of our lives that not even God can compel us to be his. If we want to be his, then all his might is ours.

"I shall not want." This is a rare note of contentment. It does not imply luxury, or abundance, or even comfort. But it is all the man needs. That God promised. "My God shall supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus." Phil. 4 : 19. The trouble with most of us is not that our needs are not supplied, but that our desires are not gratified. We cry because he have not cake, when God's promise is that his children shall not lack bread. Wise men tell us that what our age most needs is the simpler things, the real joys in life. For these we can always trust God. Jesus taught us the same truth in his sermon about the lilies of the field. Not one of them could be tramped under the hurrying feet of the throng without God's knowledge. Surely as children are more valuable than flowers, he cares more for us. And God's children can keep their heads up, and their hearts steady, in the quiet confidence that they shall not want. This assurance does not rest merely on the general fact that God is a loving God who cares. The shepherd figure is used to show us just how he cares. "He maketh

me to lie down in green pastures." "He maketh me." I do not have to go hunting through the deserts of life for the pastures. He leads me to them. He takes me to feed in the pastures of his Word and of his grace. If I am starved it is my own fault. He wants me to be satisfied. "He leadeth me beside still waters." If I am thirsty I have no one to blame but myself. "He restoreth my soul." I remember seeing in the great western sheep country a lost lamb, which had wandered far from the flock, and was lying spent and weary, crying piteous cries. We brought it to the shepherd, and he gave it a drink from his water keg, and bound up its wounds, and it went off limping to join the flocks again. Surely it must be something like this that David means. When we wander away into sin, into the things and the places where we have no right to be, God's love does not forsake us. And when we return he cares for us with the same tender care of the shepherd. There is no place where the difference between God and us is so plainly marked as here. When a man sins and is sorry, God forgets and restores his soul.

"THY ROD AND THY STAFF"

Dr. Alexander Duff records that in one of his journeys in India, from Simla to Kotghur, his road lay by a narrow bridle path, cut out of the side of a precipice. "As he rode, he watched a shepherd, followed by his sheep, making his way along the mountain side. The man carried a long rod, at one end of which was a crook, at the other a thick band of iron. If the shepherd saw the sheep creeping too far up the mountain, or feeding too near the edge of the precipice, he went back, caught one of the hind legs of the animal in his crook, and gently pulled it back to the flock. The other end was used to beat off the dangerous beasts that prowled around the places where the sheep lay.

"This brought into the traveler's remembrance the expression of David the shepherd in the Twenty-third Psalm, 'Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me,' the 'staff' clearly meaning God's watchful guiding and directing providence, and the 'rod' his omnipotence in defending his own from his foes." The God who feeds us can certainly guide us and protect us from every enemy. He does it not only for our sake, but for his name's sake. His own glory and his own joy are so wrapped up in the safety of his flock, that he makes our need his care. Therefore the note of courage, "I will fear no evil." Notice, the psalmist does not say that no evil will come to him.

Yet there is no reason why everyone cannot reach such a conclusion. More than half our troubles are fancied. The remainder are not greater than God. If we could early in our lives get rid of all unnecessary fears, and remember always that God is caring for us when the real fears come, and that though we may be hurt we never can be harmed, there would be many more happy-faced people in the world.

THE FEAST WITH THE FOES HELD BACK

It is in order to express more fully this very fact that David drops in v. 5 the figure of the shepherd, and speaks of God as Host. It is a graphic picture of heavenly help. "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies." While the battle pauses God refreshes his servant. And it is no hasty bit snatched between blows. A table is prepared at which he takes his ease; the oil that was the final expression of a liberal hospitality is poured upon his head; his cup is filled to overflowing. All the while his enemies stand powerless, held back from the attack by invisible hands, until God's warrior is ready again for his fighting.

We must not think that it is going to be easy to be God's servants. We must not think that we are going to get through life without fighting. God does not plan to fill his heaven with weaklings, but he will refresh us while we fight.

THE REAR GUARD

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." Not only are we refreshed as we fight, but there is a guard provided against attacks from the rear. It is not the foes we can see that we need most fear, but the stealthy skulkers from behind. The most terrible tales of tragedy in the world's wars have been the results of assaults from the rear. But the Christian is secure from all such attacks. From all these perils God guards. His angels with the gleaming swords, goodness and loving-kindness, shall follow us to guard us from these dangers all the days of our lives.

THE WIDE HALLS OF THE FATHER'S HOUSE

David was not only assured of refreshment in his battles and protection against attacks from behind. A golden goal was set before him, even the Father's house, where he was to dwell forever. We can never be good servants of God, fighting for him as we ought, toiling in the work he has given us to do, if we lose the idea of heaven. It was the idea David had in mind. It has been the comfort of Christ's servants always.

The hope and assurance of all who believe in Jesus is the hope of dwelling forever in the Father's house. The best way to be sure of it is to live here in God's presence. So this is the psalm of faith. If David in his troubled life could have it, why cannot we? In coming weeks we shall learn more of the troubles he had to bear, the difficulties he had to overcome. But his faith held him secure, faith that God would guard him, would provide for all his needs, even in the presence of his enemies, would refresh him, and at last would bring him to be with God in heaven. Do you wonder that the prayer the disciples made to Jesus is one of the most necessary prayers of all, "Increase our faith"?

THE LESSON'S WORDS AND PHRASES

1. **Want.** To go hungry and uncared for.
2. **Still waters.** Quiet streams where it was easy to drink.

4. **Valley of the shadow.** Literally "death shade," a strong, poetical word for the profoundest darkness. **Comfort.** Meaning here "to guide and protect."

5. **Table.** A poetical allusion to the refreshment God gives men for battles against their enemies.

6. **Follow me.** Guard me from behind.

QUESTIONS FOR INTERMEDIATE CLASSES

1. Why does David use the name "shepherd" to describe God? Why did Jesus use it to describe himself? What does God do for us as our Shepherd?

2. How does God take care of those who trust him? Can you give an instance of such care? What is the meaning of the phrase, "He restoreth my soul"? (See notes.)

3. How does God provide help for us in the midst of our fighting against temptation? What does he promise as protection against enemies from behind?

The Intermediate Catechism

Q. 35. Why are the infant children of members of the Church dedicated to God in baptism?

A. The infant children of members of the Church are dedicated to God in baptism because his cove-

nant made with believing parents includes their children.

TOPICS FOR SENIOR DISCUSSION

1. How much of this poem is autobiographical, that is, the result of David's own experiences? How far can we match his experiences in our own lives?

2. Why did Augustine call it "The Hymn of Martyrs"?

3. Why does the idea of God as Shepherd have such a hold on our thoughts? What are some of the things our Shepherd does?

4. What are the meanings implied in the figure of v. 5, of God as our Host? Is there not a big difference between what is here promised and what many expect God to do?

5. What has the hope of the Father's house to do with our battles and life here?

The Shorter Catechism

Q. 82. Is any man able perfectly to keep the commandments of God?

A. No mere man, since the fall, is able, in this life, perfectly to keep the commandments of God; but doth daily break them, in thought, word, and deed.

Lesson XIII—REVIEW—THE NOBLE LIFE OF SAMUEL

Selection for Reading, I Sam. 12 : 1-5, 13-25.

The Golden Text—"I will instruct you in the good and the right way."—I Sam. 12 : 23.

DAILY HOME READINGS

DATE	TITLE	REFERENCE
Monday, June 21.....	The Noble Life of Samuel.....	I Sam. 12: 1-5, 13-25.
Tuesday, June 22.....	Deborah and Barak Deliver Israel...	Judg. 4: 4-16.
Wednesday, June 23.....	The Victory of Gideon's Band.....	Judg. 7: 1-8, 16-21.
Thursday, June 24.....	Ruth's Choice.....	Ruth 1: 14-22.
Friday, June 25.....	The Call of the Boy Samuel.....	I Sam. 3: 1-13, 19, 20.
Saturday, June 26.....	Israel's First King.....	I Sam. 9: 15-21; 9: 25 to 10: 1.
Sunday, June 27.....	{ A Shepherd Chosen King.....	I Sam. 16: 4-16.
	{ The Lord Our Shepherd.....	Psalms 23.

REVIEW

The lessons of the past weeks have covered a very interesting period in Israel's history. They contain the story of battles and fiercely fought campaigns. But underneath the tale of battle and strife we have seen one great purpose running—God's good purpose for the people who were his by covenant. They sinned and were punished time after time. Then his mercy prepared new ways and new leaders to redeem them from the consequences of their sin. Much of the interest in the story centers about these leaders, and particularly about the leader who was to organize them as a nation in a way in which they were never organized before, and so to prepare them for a position of future greatness. This leader was Samuel. Before

we turn to a review of the lessons as a whole, we might spend a little time thinking about him, particularly about the qualities that made him great. God always needs men in every age who will do the things that Samuel did in his time, that is, the things which remind the age that God is supreme.

What were the qualities that made Samuel what he was? How much had that faith, which he learned early to have, to do with his great zeal and earnestness in the great work of God? How much had it to do with his success?

LESSON I. THE GREATEST FACT IN LIFE

The quarter began with the story of the greatest fact in life, that Christ rose again from the dead. Because he proved his power over death, because

he accomplished what he said he would here, we believe that everything else he said is true. Therefore God is Love, therefore there is salvation from sin, therefore there is life beyond the grave. The story of God's dealing with Samuel is wonderful, but most wonderful is the story of Christ. We do not need to hope that he will deal with us in the same way that he dealt with Samuel. We have Christ's word that he will.

LESSON II. INDUSTRY AND BRILLIANCY PLUS GOD

God sometimes works through miracles, but more often through men. Sometimes when the man has done all he can, God adds the miracle, even in these days. What did God add to help in the work of Deborah and Barak? God never changes. There is no situation so difficult that a faith like Deborah's and a willingness to attempt the impossible like Barak's will not challenge his aid.

LESSON III. MEN OF A FIXED PURPOSE

Not by might nor by power, but by God's Spirit are God's victories won. He wins them through men of a fixed purpose. He had found a leader trained for his task in the school of hardship. Now he found an army made of the same stuff. When God tests his Church to-day—as he constantly does—where will you be found—among the men ordered home or among those who, because of their faith in him and their mastery in themselves, are honored with a place in the battle line?

LESSON IV. RESOLUTION PLUS ACTION

Heroic resolution is only of value when followed by heroic action. Why did Orpah fail? Why did Ruth succeed? Will we do "the easiest thing"? What does Naomi teach us about the obligation of Christian love?

LESSON V. A MODEL FOR GOD'S SERVANTS

Here we meet one of the rarest of God's heroes. As a boy entering the service of God, or as a man administering justice through a long, noble life, there is much in his life to admire and copy. Let us remember his early habits in God's house, his habits of faith, the intensity of his consecration, his humility. God always needs prophets, and to do God's work men need the prophet's qualities.

LESSON VI. LOOKING GOOD OR BEING GOOD

What a man is determines what his home shall be. When a man makes God supreme in his life he helps to make him supreme in other lives. What was the parable of Jesus that gives point to the lesson? Do we merely look good?

LESSON VII. THE CONDITIONS OF REDEMPTION

Here again God's mercy intervened. He is the great Promise-Keeper. But Israel had to meet cer-

tain conditions—repentance and a whole-hearted return to God. We have no other way to freedom from the sins that beset us so easily. Then God is for us, and "if God is for us, who is against us"?

LESSON VIII. WHO SHALL BE KING?

What are the two great duties to which we are called by the golden text? There are two other things of which we are reminded by this lesson; first, that it is very hard to live in the world, and not be like the world. Yet this is always God's demand; second, that God occasionally demands of his servants that they step aside to let him work his will through another.

LESSON IX. A FEAT OF FAITH

What was the lack in Saul's character? What made Jonathan strong? Just here is where the lesson touches our lives. Men succeed in overcoming obstacles which seem insuperable, or they fail badly, as they possess or lack this quality which Jonathan had. A glance backward over this quarter proves this. The men and women through whom God worked his will for Israel's helping were strong in their faith. The rule still holds.

LESSON X. A SORRY ENDING

The failure recorded in this lesson is in sorry contrast with the success achieved by Jonathan in the last lesson. Saul failed because he lacked faith, just as Jonathan succeeded because he possessed it. Faith is a spiritual quality, but it has a great deal to do with material things. It is as Jesus said, like the foundation on which a house is built. You do not see it, but if it is not there, the house cannot stand. Because it was not there, the house of Saul's life tumbled into ruin. Read Jesus' teaching about this in Matt. 7: 24-27.

LESSON XI. THE SCHOOL OF THE KING

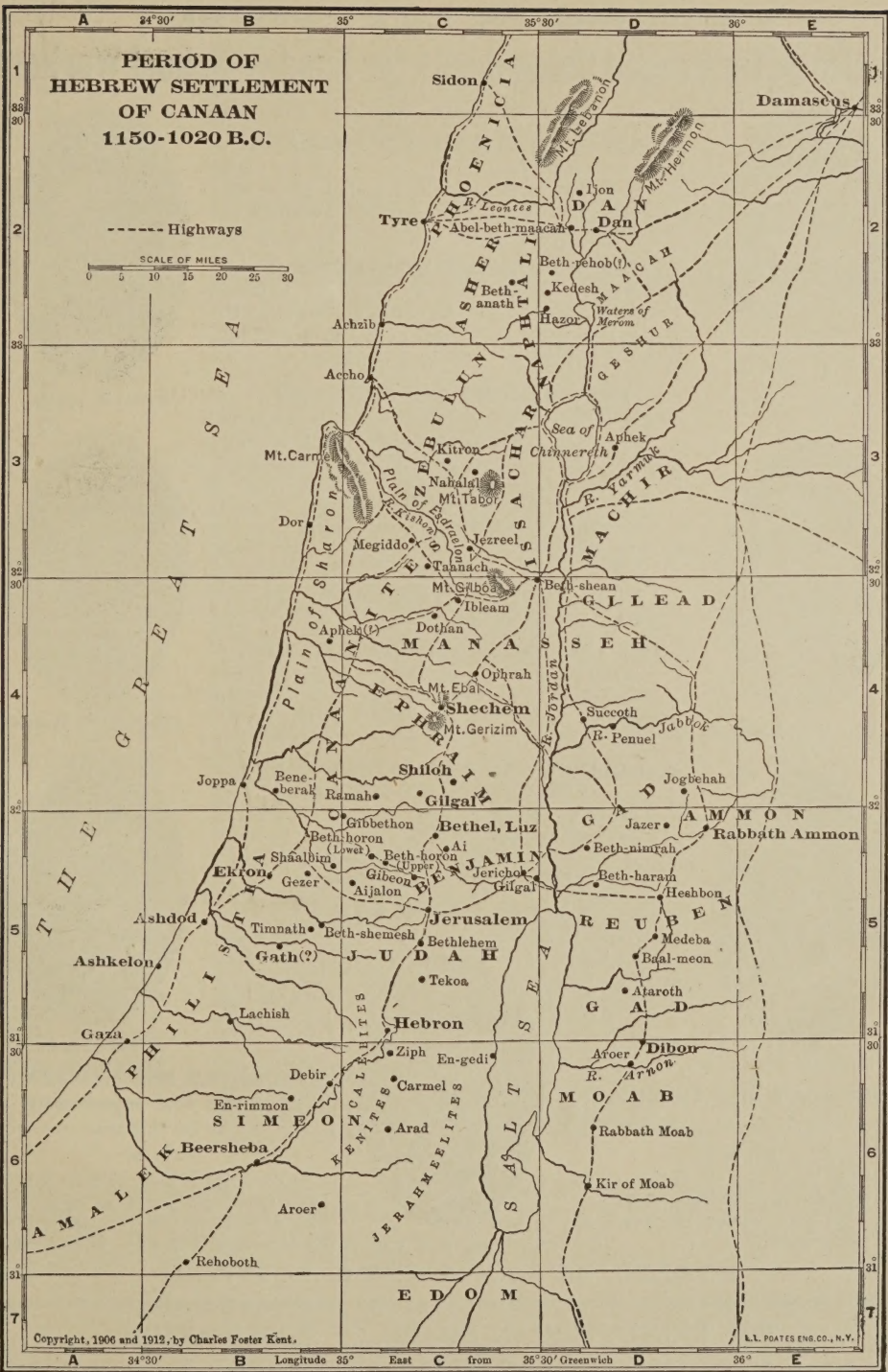
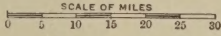
God makes strange choices of men to work his will. David was the last person that either his father or the prophet thought would be chosen. God trains men in strange ways. Here it was in the silence of the sheepfolds. With the disciples it was on the tossing waves and in fishers' boats. No man dare think that God is passing him by because he has left him in a lonely or hard place. It may be his "school of the king."

LESSON XII. THE HEART SONG OF EARTH'S PILGRIM

No argument is so strong as that of a man's own experience. David sings of what he knows. This is not a song of hope, but of accomplished facts. Therefore men going the same way that David went are heartened by it. What God has done he will do. Evil is in the world, but God is in the world, and because he is, because his rod and staff will guide, "I will fear no evil." He is a wise pilgrim who makes this song his own.

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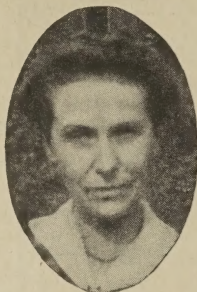
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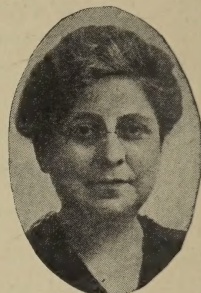


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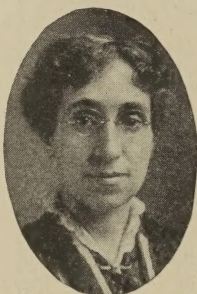
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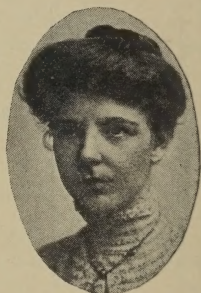
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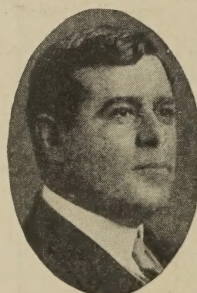


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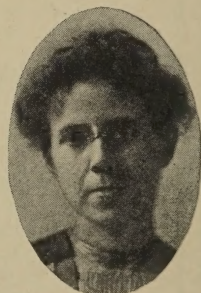


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